THE SEGA MEGA DRIVE & GENESIS ENCYCLOPEDIA

Every Game Released for Sega's 16-bit Console

THE UNOFFICIAL GUIDE

CHRIS SCULLION

INCLUDES EVERY MEGA CD AND 32X GAME

THE SEGA MEGA DRIVE & GENESIS ENCYCLOPEDIA

EVERY GAME RELEASED FOR SEGA'S 16-BIT CONSOLE

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To Mum and Dad: thank you for buying me not only Nintendo consoles, but Sega ones too, thereby making sure that I wouldn't grow up to be an annoying fanboy.

To my wee brother Kevin: cheers for being the Skate to my Axel as we rocked Streets of Rage 2 for more hours than was probably healthy.

To my fantastic wife Louise: thank you so much for continuing to put up with my moaning every time I inevitably end up with a tight deadline on these books. Your patience has been one hell of a leveller and I love you for it.

Finally, to my gorgeous daughter Serena. It's crazy to think that when I started writing these books you didn't even exist and now you're three years old and continuing to fill me with joy and pride in different ways every single day. I hope one day you can grow up to love games like yer old da does, but even if you don't I'll love you with all my soul, forever and beyond. Just don't grow up to be a criminal or anything: meet me halfway here, pal.

FOREWORD

Every gamer has a specific moment in their lives which transforms them from a casual player to a hardcore follower of interactive entertainment. For me, that moment was Christmas 1990, when I eagerly tore open the wrapping on my shiny new Japanese Mega Drive, along with a selection of games that included Super Monaco GP, Herzog Zwei, ESWAT and Golden Axe. Finding it impossible to resist the allure of burly, oiled barbarians, I quickly booted up Golden Axe – and from that moment on, I was utterly smitten. Head over heels in love. Addicted.

While I'd experienced Sega games on my dad's Atari ST (most of which were highly suspect conversions by western developers, it should be noted) and even visited a few dank and fetid arcades in my formative years, the Mega Drive felt like the real deal. The responsive controls, the intense gameplay, the impeccable Japanese design – it all came together on that most treasured of Christmas Days. Suddenly, the ST simply didn't cut it anymore; I demanded faster action, tighter design, better music and more immersive control (having three action buttons felt like being blessed with superpowers in every game I played).

As the amazing games came flowing in – Strider, Ghouls 'n Ghosts, Populous, Revenge of Shinobi, Streets of Rage – I became firmly and passionately committed to the Sega cause, a stance that was solidified by the monthly drip-feed of delicious hype from magazines like *Mean Machines, C&VG* and *Megatech*. My adoration intensified as arcade games I pumped coins into – like Alien Storm, Dynamite Duke and Aero Blasters – found their way to the console, enabling me to revel in my favourite titles from the comfort of my own home in (almost) arcade-perfect form.

And that sums up the Mega Drive neatly for me: unlike any other domestic gaming platform I'd witnessed up to that point, it really was like having a coin-op permanently hooked up to your television set. When the Mega-CD was announced, I was gripped by a bout of extreme technological fetishism that's never been rivalled, despite the comparatively massive strides taken in video game hardware since the early '90s (the Sega 32X? Less so).

Even when the technically-superior SNES was announced, my love of the Mega Drive was unshakeable. Like any reasonable person I appreciated both systems, and titles like Zelda: A Link to the Past, Axelay, Super Mario World and Super Castlevania IV remain close to my heart, but sitting here in 2020 and mulling over that age-old question: 'Which console would you take with you to a desert island?' (an inquiry which blatantly ignores the obvious fact that you wouldn't have any means of powering said console when cut off from civilisation). I'd pick Sega's 16-bit powerhouse without even a moment's hesitation.

Games like Gunstar Heroes, Story of Thor, Phantasy Star IV, MUSHA Aleste, Road Rash, Shadow Dancer, Castle of Illusion, Thunder Force IV, Rocket Knight Adventures, Gynoug, Castlevania: Bloodlines, and, of course, the adventures of a certain Sonic the Hedgehog (my school books were so festooned in doodles of Sega's speedy mascot that one of my teachers actually gave me a stern telling-off) are the building blocks of my formative gaming years; thrilling spectacles of colour, action and compelling gameplay, all beamed directly to the tiny 14-inch portable TV I had in my bedroom.

Not that the small canvas upon which these games were painted diminished their appeal one jot; the Mega Drive offers the kind of gloriously kinetic magic which has ensured it remains one of the most beloved gaming systems of all time. It's certainly at the very pinnacle of my personal list, and if you're reading this fine tome, it's safe to say you're of the same opinion.

Damien McFerran
Director / Co-owner of Nintendo Life,
Push Square and Pure Xbox

INTRODUCTION

As a child, I was fortunate enough to have parents who supported my love of gaming. My dad had already bought an Atari 2600 and a ZX Spectrum before I was born, so it was natural that he was going to understand why gaming appealed to me and was therefore only too happy to feed that interest with magazines, regular trips to the swap shop (where you could swap old 8-bit and 18-bit games for £5, a bargain) and, when Christmas came around, the latest consoles. Given that I lived in a small town just outside Glasgow, my mum, meanwhile, was presumably just happy I wasn't going out stabbing people and so supported my dad's support. If that makes sense.

It's for this reason that while my first love was Nintendo games and my life ended up heading in a very Nintendo-centric direction thanks to my career path, the fact that my parents got me a Sega Master System the following Christmas after I got my NES meant I was also a massive fan of Sega at a similarly early age. In my house, we saluted both red AND blue. Things kicked up a level in Christmas 1991 though, when eight-year-old me got my first taste of 16-bit gaming with the arrival of the Sega Mega Drive (or the Genesis, if you're based in North America). With Altered Beast included in the box and the obligatory accompanying gift of Sonic the Hedgehog, I'd never seen anything like it and was in awe of the quality of the graphics. Altered Beast looked lifelike – well, as lifelike as a man who turns into a bear and turns monsters to stone with his breath can be – and Sonic the Hedgehog was so fast and its parallax

scrolling so beautiful that I couldn't believe games could look like this (bear in mind the SNES still hadn't arrived in the UK and we'd only just got Super Mario Bros 3 a few months earlier).

As the years passed and that original shock wore off, I continued to adore my Mega Drive. Many of my greatest gaming memories were on that console: cruising down the open roads, club in hand, in Road Rash. Winning the Super Bowl in Madden and the World Cup in FIFA. Getting a second-hand Mega CD and discovering the mythical Night Trap, and subsequently getting Snatcher that Christmas and swapping plot theories with my pal at school: presumably the only other person in North Lanarkshire who got Snatcher, judging by the sales figures. Above all else, I loved playing Streets of Rage 2 with my brother (he's the one on the right in the photo): we spent countless hours punching, kicking and Grand Uppering our way through endless scum-filled streets. Then went home and played Streets of Rage 2 together.

There were other games that stick in my mind, however, that aren't spoken about anywhere near as much as the Sonics, Golden Axes and Shinobis of the Mega Drive era. I was a big fan of Cyborg Justice, a beat 'em up where you played as a robot who could grab and attach your enemies' body parts to yourself. I loved playing through Dracula Unleashed and the Sherlock Holmes games with my dad, two rare examples of FMV games done right on the Mega CD. And I can't begin to tell you how many times I completed The Terminator: sure, it was obscenely short, but that just made it perfect when I only had time for a quick 15-minute burst of something before bed.

If you're new to this series of books and didn't buy the NES and SNES Encyclopedias (still available in all good booksellers, incidentally), it's these less discussed games that the Mega Drive Encyclopedia is mainly designed to address. Everyone had games in their collection that may not have been known by a lot of people but were loved by them. Maybe you adored Rolo to the Rescue back in the day and are constantly praying for a reboot. Perhaps you were given Team USA as a gift and it remains your favourite basketball game after all these years. Or maybe you saw Splatterhouse 2 in a bargain bin one day, decided to take a punt on it and fell in love with how comically grotty it was. Regardless of which games were the ones that formed your own personal memories, they're all in here.

Thank you so much for reading this book, it means the world to me. I'd like to say this one was easier to write than the SNES Encyclopedia, but with nearly 1,000 games (when you take the Mega CD and 32X into account) and the small matter of a global pandemic forming the backdrop to my writing process, it may have been the hardest to write so far. Please do contact me on Twitter @scully1888 and let me know what you think of the book, and please do review it online: your feedback is immensely important. Finally, apologies if you liked the full-page entries in the NES and SNES books: there are so many games in here that there just wasn't enough space to include any this time. Next time, though, it's going to be a very different story, as I take a look at a system that had a much smaller library but was home to some truly iconic games. Next time, we go 64-bit.

Chris Scullion

THE HISTORY OF THE MEGA DRIVE

They say third time's the charm, and that was certainly the case for Sega, even when you go all the way back to the company's beginnings. It wasn't until the trio of Irving Bromberg, his son Marty Bromley and their friend James Humpert had already terminated two coin-operated amusement companies – Standard Games in 1940 and California Games in 1945 – that they finally landed on a name that would stick, Service Games (later shortened to Sega), in 1946. There's a lot more to it than that, with subsequent renaming, trading and company dissolutions, but that's not what you're here to read about.

Third time was also the charm when Sega, which was considered a big player in the arcade scene by the early 1980s, decided to enter the home console market. Its first system, the SG-1000, was released in Japan on 15 July 1983 and could have been a success had it not been for one small matter: the Famicom, Nintendo's console (which became the NES over here), launched on exactly the same day. Not even a hardware revision called the SG-1000 II – which replaced the first system's hardwired joystick with two detachable controllers – was able to shift Sega's console journey past first gear.

Things improved noticeably with Sega's second attempt, the Sega Mark III, known in the west as the Sega Master System. On paper, the Master System was a more powerful console than the NES: although they both had an 8-bit CPU the Master System's had twice the clock rate. It also had a 16-bit graphics processor, and could display more colours on screen than Nintendo's console, meaning it was more in line with NEC's TurboGrafx-16 console than the NES.

While the Master System would enjoy significant success in Europe (where it outsold the NES) and Brazil (where the NES didn't even officially arrive until 1993), it failed to gain any traction in North America and continued to do dismally in Japan. Sega decided that with its next console it couldn't afford to launch after Nintendo's next system – or, indeed on the same day – so it got cracking on its first proper 16-bit console and on 29 October 1988, the Sega Mega Drive launched in Japan. Unfortunately, it was overshadowed once again by Nintendo: just a week earlier, it had launched the hugely anticipated Super Mario Bros 3, and many gamers were too busy playing that to worry about a new console.

Consoles don't live or die by their launch success, of course, and despite this minor initial setback the Mega Drive would still enjoy a huge head-start over the Super Famicom (the SNES in the west). Nintendo's 16-bit system wouldn't arrive in Japan until the end of 1990, giving Sega two whole years to convince Japanese gamers that it was a legitimate rival. Unfortunately for Sega, Japan wasn't convinced: many gamers were happy to keep playing the Famicom – mainly because Nintendo's exclusivity deals meant it was the only home to the likes of Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest – and those looking for something more powerful tended to instead buy the TurboGrafx (known as the PC Engine in that region).

Undeterred, Sega decided to continue with its plan and prepared to bring the Mega Drive to the west. It was released in North America on 14 August 1989 – again, two years before the SNES – as the Sega Genesis, and launched with seven games: Alex Kidd in the Enchanted Castle, Altered Beast, Last Battle, Space Harrier II, Super Thunder Blade, Thunder Force II and Tommy Lasorda Baseball. Believe it or not, it was the last of these games that best summed up two of Sega's main principles when it came to gaining attention and capturing some of Nintendo's North American market share: sports games and exclusive celebrity endorsements. Sega acquired some of the biggest names in sports and entertainment – Arnold Palmer, Pat Riley, Buster Douglas, Joe Montana, even Michael Jackson – and created games starring these names which could only

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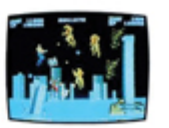
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be found on its console. It then drove this point home with its infamous 'Genesis Does' marketing campaign, a series of TV commercials that showcased the power of the console, rhymed off these celebrity-endorsed games and ended with the killer catchphrase: 'Genesis does what Nintendon't' (the endorsements would continue beyond this campaign with the likes of Ayrton Senna, Evander Holyfield and David Robinson).

In a sense, this claim meant more than simply games with famous faces on the title screen. Although Sega wasn't referring directly to it (mainly because the SNES hadn't arrived yet), the Genesis did actually outperform Nintendo's console in a number of areas. While the SNES boasted unique features like its famous Mode 7 sprite scaling and rotation functionality, the Genesis had some impressive tricks of its own. The SNES may have had a more powerful GPU, but Sega's CPU once again clocked at more than double that of Nintendo's (7.6 MHz versus 3.58). This meant the Mega Drive could display more sprites on-screen and could generally handle fast-paced games with a stable frame rate. Sega would eventually be mocked for referring to this as 'blast processing' in its ads, to the extent that some claimed it wasn't even a thing, but the reality was that – despite it being a terrible nickname – its processor was indeed much faster.

Sega's plan worked. The Genesis started selling, and gamers in America were starting to make the jump. After failing with the SG-1000 and struggling to make the Master System a success anywhere outside Europe and South America, Sega had once again proved that third time's the charm. But that wasn't the only example: it was also ready to rock the gaming world with its third attempt at a mascot.

Sega's first mascot was Opa-Opa, the cute little spaceship with legs from Fantasy Zone. When Alex Kidd in Miracle World was released on the Master System, he took over mascotting duties. While both were appealing characters, neither of them could hold a candle to Mario. Sega needed a new mascot, someone who would seem cool and hip and have an attitude befitting the early '90s. And so, exactly two months before the SNES launched in North America with Super Mario World bundled alongside it, Sega unleashed Sonic the Hedgehog on the world, and with that the 16-bit console war was well and truly on.

It's not entirely clear who came out on top in the US and Canada. Despite the Genesis's two-year head-start, Nintendo caught up and a late burst with games like Donkey Kong Country meant the SNES likely edged the Genesis in total sales in the region by the time the dust had settled. In Europe, it was a different story: there Sega was the clear winner, as the company's past reputation with the Master System helped the Mega Drive – it retained its Japanese name in Europe – outsell the SNES cleanly. Meanwhile, in Japan, Nintendo remained supreme and Sega did poorly yet again.

When all was said and done, the Mega Drive / Genesis sold around 30 million units worldwide, which wasn't too bad considering its struggle to make an impact in Japan (by comparison, the SNES sold 49 million, 17 million of which were Japanese sales). Regardless of where you stood in the 16-bit war, however, there could be no doubt that Sega had finally firmly established itself as Nintendo's main rival. Nintendo and Sega were the two big names on every gamer's lips, and as both the Mega Drive and SNES wound down, all eyes were on both companies' next projects: Nintendo's Ultra 64, and Sega's Saturn. There were also rumblings that Sony was working on a console, but that didn't matter: after all, there wasn't really room in this race for three horses, was there?

THE GAMES

Sega's main problem with the Master System was that it suffered from a lack of well-known third-party games. This was mainly because any publishers who wanted to release games on Nintendo's vastly more popular NES had to agree to a contract that stated, among other things, that any games released on the NES weren't allowed to appear on another system for at least two years. This essentially locked Sega out of series like Castlevania, Mega Man, Final Fantasy and the popular sports games (like those from Tecmo and Konami).

The arrival of the Mega Drive caused many publishers to take note, and a number of them – frustrated by Nintendo's terms and its need to approve every game as family friendly – were tempted to leave the NES behind and move exclusively to Sega's 16-bit console. Sensing this, Nintendo relaxed its rules (well, most of them) and allowed publishers to release their games on multiple systems. This made the 16-bit landscape wildly different from the 8-bit one: while the NES and Master System game libraries had nearly nothing in common, the SNES and Mega Drive shared many third-party titles.

This is a roundabout way of saying that if you already own the SNES Encyclopedia (in which case, thank you), you may notice that a number of games in that book appear here again. While it would have been practical (and much easier on my brain) to have simply copied and pasted those entries into this book, it would also be unfair on anyone who paid good money for both titles. As such, any entries here that also featured in the SNES book have been completely rewritten, giving a fresh take on them while still ensuring that they're informative to anyone for whom this is their first book in the series (in which case, thank you as well).

This section of the book contains 799 games released for the Sega Mega Drive and Sega Genesis in North America, Europe, Australia and South America during the console's original run. While I tended not to feature multi-game re-releases in the SNES Encyclopedia, the sheer number of official Sega-published compilation cartridges would have meant that leaving them out here would have resulted in a sizeable chunk of the library being unaccounted for. As such, multi-game cartridges do feature in this book, as long as they were legal and not '30 games in one' bootlegs.

I also only briefly mention the new batch of independently released Mega Drive and Genesis games that have started to become popular in modern days. While these releases are perfectly valid in their own right and work on original hardware, I want this book to be a definitive collection and not a work-in-progress, and as such I'm only focusing on games released during the console's main run.

A large number of Mega Drive and Genesis games had different titles in North America and Europe. Given that this book will be available in both regions, I've listed each game by the title it's best known as (where possible). For example, if you're a North American reader and you were a big fan of Championship Soccer '94 you may be wondering why it isn't in this book. On the contrary, it's in here under its European title, Sensible Soccer. If you can't find a game you're looking for, please check the index at the back of the book, because chances are it was called something different in another country and all known alternative titles are included in the index.

One final housekeeping note: the terms Mega Drive and Genesis are going to be interchanged fairly frequently in this book. Since the book will be going on sale in all regions, I feel it's important to make sure it speaks to both North Americans (who knew it as the Genesis) and everyone else (who knew it as the Mega Drive). As such, to avoid as much confusion as possible, I will generally refer to the console as the Mega Drive throughout the book – since that was its original name in Japan – but when discussing games that were only released in North America and not Europe, I will instead refer to it as the Genesis.

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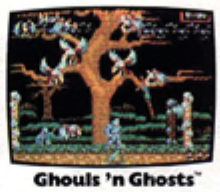
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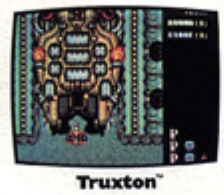
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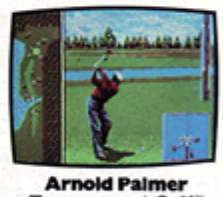
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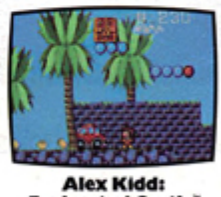
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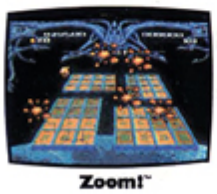
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3 NINJAS KICK BACK

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Malibu Interactive

A TIE-IN BASED on the movie of the same name. Rocky, Colt and Tum-Tum have a problem: their grandfather Mori (played in the movie by Victor Wong) needs their help to protect a magical dagger from his evil rival, but they're only kids. Ninja kids, granted, but kids nevertheless. After completing their martial arts training in the first few stages, off they head with their weapons – eldest brother Rocky with his bo staff, middle brother Colt with his katana sword and younger brother Tum Tum with his sai – in search of any bad guys looking to steal the dagger. There are five levels in total, taking in the woods, Mori's cabin, a hospital, Japanese gardens and a castle containing the legendary Cave of Gold. ■

FACT

The music was composed by Richard Joseph, a legendary UK game musician whose work spanned over two decades and included the likes of Sensible Soccer and The Chaos Engine.

6-PAK

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

SEGA RELEASED A number of compilation cartridges over the course of the Mega Drive's life, as you'll see later in this book. In case you couldn't guess by the title, 6-Pak contains six classic Sega games all bundled together on a single cart. The games in question are Golden Axe, Sonic the Hedgehog, Columns, Revenge of Shinobi, Streets of Rage and Super Hang-On, so it's a fairly decent selection of early Mega Drive titles. Like numerous games released in North America, 6-Pak originally launched in a standard plastic box, then was subsequently re-released later in a cardboard box. Around 40 games were given this cardboard re-release treatment in North America: I will now list them all. Okay, not really. ■

FACT

The image of Columns on the 6-Pak cover is actually taken from the cover of the Master System version.

688 ATTACK SUB

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Microprose

ORIGINALLY DEVELOPED BY EA for home computers, 688 Attack Sub was licensed to Sega and ported by MicroProse. Set during a Cold War scenario, each of its 10 missions lets you play as a US Los Angeles-class submarine, while most give you the option to instead play as the Soviets in an Alfa-class sub. As far as submarine simulators go this is one is pretty advanced for its time: there are over 40 different controls to learn as you essentially act as a jack of all trades. As well as visiting the radio room to receive transmissions, you also have to use the periscope, set waypoints on the navigation board, set your depth, load torpedoes, check the sonar, fire your weapons and the like. ■

FACT

688 refers to SSN-688, the number of the USS *Los Angeles*. Another 61 Los Angeles-class subs were made, and only one – the USS *Hyman G. Rickover* (SSN-709) – wasn't named after a place in America.

AAAHH!!! REAL MONSTERS

Year 1995
Publisher Viacom New Media
Developer Realtime Associates

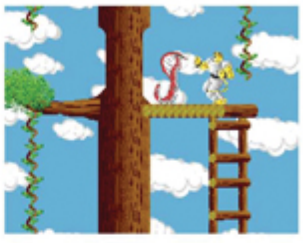
BASED ON NICKELODEON'S unique cartoon series, Aaahh!!! Real Monsters follows Ickis, Krumm and Oblina as they take their midterm exam at the Monster Academy to prove their monstering mettle. There are six stages – the city dump, a school, a post office, the Natural History Museum, the mall and the Monster Hunter's house – and each stage has three tasks. As well as scaring any enemies that get in your way, you also have to collect certain items your headmaster the Gromble has requested, and finally scare the 'assigned' victim: be that the post office clerk, the museum guard or what have you. Depending on how well you do all three tasks, you'll be given a grade between 1–5 roaches. ■

FACT

Although it's never explicitly stated in the cartoon, the dump the monsters live in is supposed to be the Fresh Kills Landfill, which was open in New York's Staten Island from 1948 until 2001.

ACTION 52

Year 1993
Publisher Active Enterprises
Developer FarSight Technologies



FOLLOWING THE NOTORIETY of its 1991 NES game Action 52, Florida-based Active Enterprises decided to have another try on the Mega Drive. Although the title is the same as its predecessor, the 52 games on the Sega cartridge are by and large completely different. With Active Enterprises handing development duties to an external studio, the general quality of the games on offer is better (and far less glitchy) but it's still fair to say there aren't any gems here. Not even a new Cheetahmen adventure was enough to justify the $199 price point Action 52 boasted at launch. The 52nd game is called Challenge, and is actually a mix of higher levels from most of the other games, designed to see how long the player can last. ■

FACT

Vince Perri, the businessman who created Action 52, got the idea when he saw his son playing a bootleg Taiwanese NES cart with 40 pirated games on it, and decided to do the same thing legally.

THE ADDAMS FAMILY

Year 1993
Publisher Ocean Software
Developer Flying Edge

CON ARTIST ABIGAIL Craven fancies getting her hands on the Addams Family fortune, so she brainwashes Uncle Fester and causes him to forget his memory. She uses Fester (as well as evil lawyer Tully Alford) to round up and imprison the rest of the Addams Family in their mansion, with the notable exception of Gomez (played by Raul Julia in the movie this game is based on). It's up to Gomez to explore the Addams mansion and rescue his family members via the tried and tested method of jumping on a lot of things' heads. After successfully freeing them all (ending with Morticia in the caves under the house), Gomez then has to fight his neighbour Judge Womack to beat the game. ■

FACT

The Addams Family theme tune was composed in 1964 by Vic Mizzy. Decades later, while in his late 80s, he wrote the comedic music that played during the outtakes in Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man 2* and *3*.

ADDAMS FAMILY VALUES

Year 1995
Publisher Ocean Software
Developer Ocean Software

OCEAN'S PUGSLEY'S SCAVENGER Hunt, based on *The Addams Family* animated series, was only released on Nintendo systems, but Sega was allowed back into the fray when the second movie hit the silver screen. Addams Family Values focuses on baby Pubert, the latest addition to the family, who's been kidnapped by his unhinged former nanny Debbie Jellinski. Uncle Fester gets a ransom note telling him that if he doesn't sign over half of the Addams Family estate, Pubert will never be seen again. Clearly deciding they're having none of that, the family heads out and tracks Debbie down to a deserted mansion outside of town. Playing as Fester, you have to make your way through seven stages as you try to get inside the mansion and rescue Pubert. ■

FACT

Both Addams Family movies were directed by Barry Sonnenfeld, who would go on to become better known for directing the first three Men in Black films.

THE ADVENTURES OF BATMAN & ROBIN

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Clockwork Tortoise

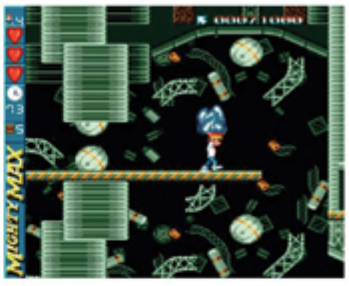
A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT game to the one released on the SNES, The Adventures of Batman & Robin is an interesting mix of run 'n' gun and brawler gameplay. Playing as either Batman or Robin you have a jump button and a single attack button that covers every possibility. If you use it while enemies are nearby you'll deliver a switch punch, kick or headbutt, whereas if you use it from a distance you'll throw a projectile. There are three projectile types: the batarang, bat star and bat bolo, and each of them can be levelled up for more powerful and larger attacks. They also come with their own recharging power meter: if you throw one while the meter's full it'll do more damage and pass through enemies, hitting more than one. ■

FACT

The plot's typically batty: Mr Freeze has asked the Joker, Two-Face and the Mad Hatter to keep the duo occupied while he builds a massive ice cannon.

THE ADVENTURES OF MIGHTY MAX

Year 1994
Publisher Ocean Software
Developer WJS Design



THE EVIL SKULLMASTER has been using secret portals to stockpile the most powerful weapons in the world. As if hiding them in portals wasn't secure enough, he's also split each one into eight parts and assigned a load of goons to guard them. The whole reason for this is world domination (as it always is) so it's up to Mighty Max and his friends Felix and Bea to travel through each portal, collect all the weapon pieces and use them to stop the SkullMaster. There are five separate locations in the game: a volcano, a space station, Inca ruins, a river and a jungle. Unusually for a platformer, there's a split-screen two-player co-op option should you wish to bring a pal along. ■

FACT

The game manual included a 15-page comic book which actually served as issue 0 of the short-lived *Adventures of Mighty Max* comic series.

THE ADVENTURES OF ROCKY & BULLWINKLE AND FRIENDS

Year 1994
Publisher Absolute Entertainment
Developer Imagineering

THE ROCKY & Bullwinkle Museum in Frostbite Falls was barely a few hours old when drama struck: their old foes Boris and Natasha turned up and stole a trio of fabled treasures that the heroic pair had collected on their travels. Now it's up to the titular moose and squirrel to head off and recover the goodies. Each character has their own separate stages in this run-of-the-mill platformer: Rocky has to navigate the docks, city streets and Pottsylvania, whereas Bullwinkle takes on Whynchutaka Peak, the Upsidasium Mines and the mechanical whale Maybe Dick. It's not exactly the easiest platform game ever made, not least because of the presence of that old faithful, a minecart stage. ■

FACT

The SNES version's intro has a reference to the Game Boy version. It's replaced here with a joke about the narrator calling the duo 'zeroes' then saying it was a typo.

AERO THE ACRO-BAT

Year 1993
Publisher Sunsoft
Developer Iguana Entertainment

YOU WEREN'T WORTH your salt as a publisher back in the '90s unless you had a mascot platformer (as you'll undoubtedly discover as you read through this book). Sunsoft's effort was Aero the Acro-Bat, a circus employee who happens to be an acrobatic bat. Aero has to rescue his kidnapped colleagues from the evil Edgar Ektor, a disgruntled former clown who's decided to sabotage the circus. Aero does this by clearing the task set on each stage: this could involve triggering a set number of disappearing platforms, finding a key, turning on all the light switches, jumping through magic hoops or what have you. Only when this mission is cleared will the portal to the next stage appear. ■

FACT

One of the game's programmers was David Brevik, who would go on to co-found Blizzard North and program and co-design the first Diablo game.

AERO THE ACRO-BAT 2

Year 1994
Publisher Sunsoft
Developer Iguana Entertainment

AERO'S SEQUEL TAKES place immediately after the events of the first game, where our fearless flapper finds a secret magician's box in Ektor's museum and enters it to end up in a strange new world. There, an Eastern European bat called Batasha asks for his help so he happily obliges, completely unaware that Ektor is still alive, and preparing to execute 'Plan B' with his sidekick, Zero the Kamikaze Squirrel. Such drama surely couldn't be contained within Aero's original moveset, which is why Aero 2 includes a brand new Drop Drill move: this lets him jump into the air then drop directly downwards, hurting enemies and ploughing through weak floors (in the first game he could only do Diagonal Drill attacks). ■

FACT

The credits end with 'in memory of Ayrton Senna', a reference to the F1 racer who died in a crash the same year the game launched.

AEROBIZ

Year 1992
Publisher Koei
Developer Koei

IF YOU'VE EVER dreamt of running your own airline then Aerobiz will let you live out your very specific fantasy. Budding Richard Bransons can choose between two scenarios, each taking place during a different era of air transport. The first takes place between 1963 and 1995 and starts players off with a relatively modest budget as they attempt to grab a slice of the ever evolving aerospace market. The second goes from 1983 to the distant future (2015) and is a more difficult campaign, with a lot more money to play with and the likes of supersonic aircraft bringing their own unique challenges. The aim is to eventually operate flights that link all 22 cities in the game. ■

FACT

The Japanese title for Aerobiz was the rather poetic Air Management: Betting on the Sky.

AEROBIZ SUPERSONIC

Year 1994
Publisher Koei
Developer Koei

THE SEQUEL TO Aerobiz does more than its predecessor in every way. The number of cities has increased from 22 to 89, there are now 53 different types of aircraft you can buy (from 10 different manufacturers, from Airbus and Boeing to Lockheed and Tupolev), and you can now choose between four different scenarios instead of two: The Dawn of the Jet Age (1955–1975), Air Travel Takes Off (1970–1990), Airlines Cover the Globe (1985–2005) and Supersonic Travel (2000–2020). World events have an impact on your business – war, tourism booms, natural disasters, Olympic Games – and while the scenarios set in the past use actual events, the futuristic ones make up new ones. ■

FACT

The Japanese NEC PC-98 version of the game has a special fifth scenario which spans the entire duration of all four other scenarios, from 1955 to 2020.

AFTER BURNER II

Year 1990
Publisher Sega
Developer Dempa

THE ORIGINAL AFTER Burner hit arcades in 1987 and made use of Sega's Super Scaler technology – previously used to great effect in Out Run and Space Harrier – to give an impressive 3D effect at high speeds. Although it was a truly impressive game for the time, its creators weren't happy with the difficulty level, believing that the inability to control your speed made it too hard. Just a few months later Sega released After Burner II: despite the name implying a full sequel, it was more of an enhanced update, adding a few extra levels (21 versus 18), tweaking the music a little and – most importantly – adding a throttle control that let players go faster or slower depending on the situation. Naturally, when it came to the Mega Drive port a few years later it was After Burner II that was given the home treatment rather than the inferior sequel. Flying an F-14 Tomcat jet fighter, your aim is to survive all 21 stages by taking out enemies but, more crucially, avoiding their attacks. You're armed with a machine gun that automatically fires an endless stream of bullets: these are deadly but difficult to aim accurately, especially at distant enemies. For more delicate situations, then, you're also armed with a limited number of heat-seeking missiles: these can be fired when you've locked onto an enemy. After every few stages another friendly plane appears and you can dock with it to replenish your missiles. ■

FACT

Creator Yu Suzuki wanted to make it look like the player was starting in the Mediterranean and ended up in Russia. He wanted to show the Kremlin in a later stage, but the large sprite took up too much memory so he scrapped the idea.

AIR BUSTER

Year 1991
Publisher Kaneko
Developer Inter State

ALSO KNOWN AS Aero Blasters on the TurboGrafx-16, this side-scrolling shoot 'em up was originally an arcade game. In the year 2030, Earth is invaded by aliens called the Mega Load Masters. It looks like we're all doomed until Charles K. Takeda turns up with the Buster System, a futuristic weapon that can destroy matter with mind power. He equips two fighter jets with the Buster System and trains his kids Holly and Mike to fly them. As well as the single-player mode, Air Buster lets two players either take turns or play simultaneous co-op. Although the game was praised for its impressive presentation, some criticised it for being too easy. As an entry point for the genre, though, you could do much worse. ■

FACT

The promotional flyer sent to arcade owners was pretty convincing: 'Call your local distributor today, for who knows what the skies hold for tomorrow!'

AIR DIVER

Year 1990
Publisher Seismic
Developer Copya System

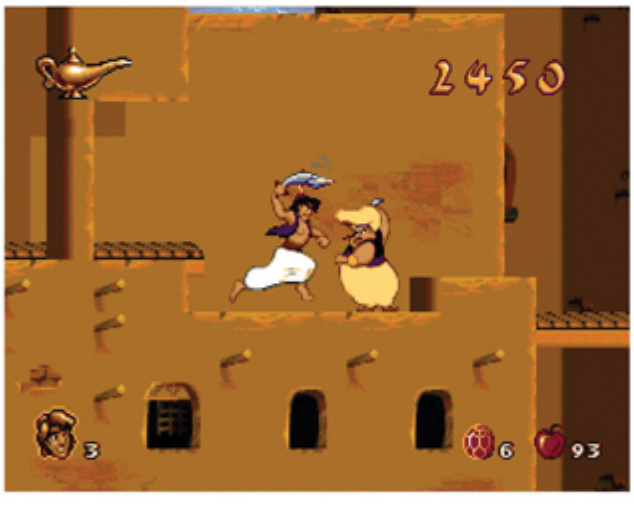
IF YOU ENJOY After Burner but wish you could get even closer to the action, Air Diver may be your cup of tea. Flying an F-119D Stealth Fighter – don't bother looking it up, it doesn't exist – you have to take on an unnamed terrorist organisation from the Middle East who it eventually turns out are being supported by aliens. It has a very similar feel to After Burner but there are two notable differences: it's played with a first-person viewpoint, and instead of simply having to survive each stage you have to actively pursue and destroy a set number of enemies before you can proceed. Occasionally you'll have to fight the 'Super Carriers': boss ships with names like *Metallica* and *Black Widow*. ■

FACT

The fictional F-119D looks suspiciously like an F-19, a mythical 'classified' plane that was never officially revealed by the US military but was made into a model aircraft kit in the '80s.

ALADDIN

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Virgin Games



WHILE SNES OWNERS enjoyed a Capcom-developed Aladdin game designed by future Resident Evil designer Shinji Mikami, Mega Drive owners instead got a completely different Aladdin game handled by Virgin Interactive. Though many argue over which was the better take on Disney's hit movie, the general consensus is that the Mega Drive one wins out due to its superior visual style. For the first time, rather than simply licence out its property and wait for the results, Disney actually offered some of its own animators to help out with the development of Aladdin. Disney's animators hand-drew the animation frames for Aladdin and the game's other characters, and using a new process called Digicel, Virgin was able to take those animation cels and digitise them into the game – similar to the way Mortal Kombat used footage of actors – resulting in smooth, beautifully animated characters that look like they wandered straight into the game from the movie.

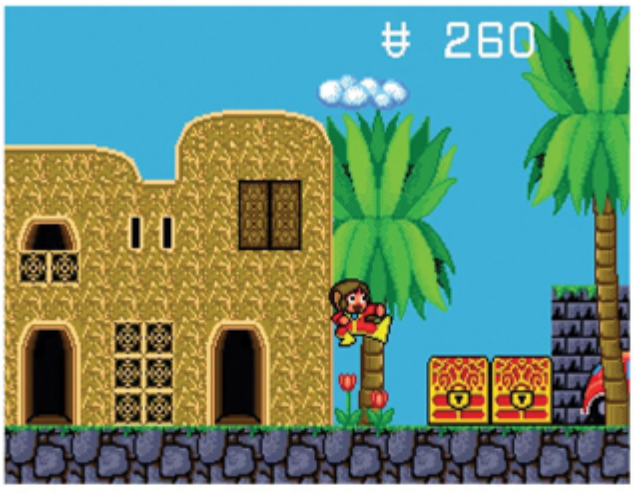
Look beyond its impressive visuals and the game itself is a fairly standard action platformer. Playing as the titular street urchin, players follow the plot of the movie, guiding Aladdin through the markets of Agrabah, the desert, the Sultan's dungeon, the Cave of Wonders, inside the Genie's lamp and the Sultan's palace before a final encounter with the evil Jafar. Aladdin was such a success that it made instant stars of its development team: most notably director David Perry, who then left to form Shiny Entertainment and brought over a bunch of his Virgin colleagues to work on Earthworm Jim. ■

FACT

The Sega logo opens with the Genie dressed as a referee. An early prototype version of the game used at the CES trade show has him dressed as a cheerleader instead.

ALEX KIDD IN THE ENCHANTED CASTLE

Year 1989
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega



BACK IN THE days when Sonic the Hedgehog was just a twinkle in Sega's eye, the company's most notable mascot was Alex Kidd. This 14-year-old Liam Gallagher lookalike had starred in four games on the Sega Master System (most notably the classic Alex Kidd in Miracle World) before making the jump up to Sega's 16-bit system. In the series canon, Alex Kidd in the Enchanted Castle is a direct sequel to Miracle World, and has Alex exploring the planet Paperock in search of his missing dad, King Thor, who's rumoured to have been kidnapped by the planet's evil ruler Ashra. The majority of the game is your typical side-scrolling platformer. Alex has two attacks – a punch and a jump kick – but is otherwise extremely vulnerable: the slightest tap against an enemy will instantly kill him and send his little ghost flying up into the sky. Some stages have optional shops and bonus minigames where you can play Janken (rock, paper, scissors) against enemies to win other items. It's possible to acquire a pair of dinky vehicles, which change the platforming gameplay significantly. The Sukopako is a tiny motorbike that lets you plough through enemies without taking damage (until you hit a rock and lose it), while the Pedicopter is a similarly small pedal-powered helicopter that can fire missiles. While it wasn't exactly Alex Kidd's most critically acclaimed game – many criticised the floaty controls and unforgiving collision detection – Enchanted Castle is still notable as the only time Sega's one-time mascot got to taste the 16-bit life. ■

FACT

Alex Kidd went back to the Master System for a fifth and final time after this, ending his career in the brilliant but short crossover title Alex Kidd in Shinobi World.

ALIEN 3

Year 1992
Publisher Arena Entertainment
Developer Probe Software

THE ALIEN 3 game is to the *Alien 3* movie what *Aliens* was to *Alien*. What this confusing sentence means is that whereas the film was a tense weapons-free affair with a single Alien roaming a prison colony, the game has you blasting your way through countless xenomorphs with a pulse rifle, a flamethrower and a grenade launcher. This one doesn't do subtlety. There are 20 stages in total: most of these involve destroying Aliens while trying to find and rescue a set number of prisoners before a strict timer runs out. Some stages mix this up by being filled with only enemies or only prisoners, while the 'guardian' levels put you in a boss battle against a larger Alien. ■

FACT

While the SNES version of Alien 3 has the same ending as the movie, this one doesn't. Instead it ends with Ripley leaving the colony, looking back and saying 'It is done.'

ALIEN SOLDIER

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Treasure

THE CRITICAL ACCLAIM given to Gunstar Heroes (found elsewhere in this book) led to Treasure making a spiritual successor a couple of years later. Alien Soldier is another run 'n' gun game that plays similarly to Gunstar Heroes in some respects, but whereas its predecessor was a combination of side-scrolling stages and boss battles, here the emphasis is very much on the latter. The game consists of 25 very brief and easy side-scrolling sections containing a total of 31 epic boss fights. Your character, Epsilon-Eagle, is armed with four different weapons they can switch between at will, but ammo is limited. There are more complex tricks for experts, such as the ability to counter enemy attacks and turn their bullets into health top-ups. ■

FACT

Although Alien Soldier didn't get a proper boxed release in North America, it was made available for download through its cable-based Sega Channel service.

ALIEN STORM

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

A SWARM OF vicious aliens have invaded Earth and are disguising themselves as humans and… um, bins in an attempt to infiltrate society. Deciding that enough is enough, a trio of citizens calling themselves the Alien Busters sets out to defeat the alien scum and restore peace to Earth. This beat 'em up lets you play as one of three characters: the neckless musclebound meathead Gordon, the nimble flamethrower-wielding Karla and the strange Slammer, a robot who has an electric whip and can blow itself up as a special move. Occasionally the action is broken up by on-rails running sections and first-person lightgun shooter segments, the latter allowing you to destroy swathes of scenery while aliens fly at your face. ■

FACT

If you've played Alien Storm but those character names are unfamiliar, that's because Gordon, Karla and Slammer are known as Garth, Karen and Scooter in some versions.

ALISIA DRAGOON

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Game Arts

WHEN BALDOUR, THE prince of evil, murdered the magician who tried to end his reign of terror, the magician's young daughter Alisia watched on horrified. Fast forward a number of years and Alisia is now a woman armed with powerful magical abilities just like her old man. Her main attack is a large burst of lightning, which homes in on nearby enemies and can be charged for more damage and range. More interestingly, though, she's also accompanied by four dragon-like monster companions who help her out along the way. You can have one of these assigned at a time, and it'll fly around attacking enemies on your behalf. It has its own health meter, but you can swap it out for one of the others as you see fit. ■

FACT

Alisia Dragoon's story and character art were created by Gainax, a Japanese anime studio known best for Neon Genesis Evangelion.

ALTERED BEAST

Year 1989
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

IT WAS COMMONPLACE in the '80s and '90s for consoles to launch with a game included. Since Sonic the Hedgehog didn't yet exist when the Mega Drive launched in North America and Europe, the game chosen to be bundled with Sega's 16-bit system was Altered Beast, a port of its popular arcade title. You play as a formerly dead Roman Centurion who's been brought back to life by Zeus (with the famous words 'rise from your grave') in order to defeat the evil Neff and rescue Zeus's daughter Athena. To help make sure you get the job done, Zeus has also given you a special power: if you can collect a handful of spirit balls you can transform into an animal – or alter yourself into a beast, if you will – and unleash powerful special moves. There are five stages in total, each turning you into a different beast: a werewolf, a weredragon, a werebear, a weretiger and a gold werewolf (because presumably they only had 'were' creatures left when Zeus went to the shop).

FACT

Neff (in his final purple rhino form) is one of the select group of video game bad guys who appear in the Bad-Anon support group scene in Disney's *Wreck-It Ralph*.

At the end of each stage you'll encounter Neff, who loudly declares 'WELCOME TO YOUR DOOM' and transforms into a huge boss creature. As a first taste of Mega Drive gaming for many early adopters, Altered Beast was an interesting title. While it was criticised for its slow pace and frustrating boss fights, it was also praised for how close it was to the arcade version in terms of graphical detail: a good indicator of this new console's power. ■

AMERICAN GLADIATORS

Year 1993
Publisher GameTek
Developer Imagitec Design

NOTHING SAYS '90s popular culture like *American Gladiators* (and its UK equivalent), and its competitive one-on-one nature made it an ideal candidate for a video game adaptation. This 16-bit incarnation contains a total of six events from the show: Assault (the one with the bazooka), Joust (the one with the big sticks), The Wall (the one with… um, the wall), Atlasphere (the one with the big hamster balls), Powerball (the one with the baskets) and the Eliminator (the assault course at the end). As well as a single head-to-head mode for one or two players, you can also put together a tournament where up to 16 players can take part in a series of rounds, just in case you can find 15 other people willing to play. ■

FACT

American Gladiators is one of a handful of Mega Drive games that doesn't work with a 6-button controller, even if you hold down the Mode button. You'll need a 3-button one.

ANDRE AGASSI TENNIS

Year 1992
Publisher TecMagik
Developer TecMagik

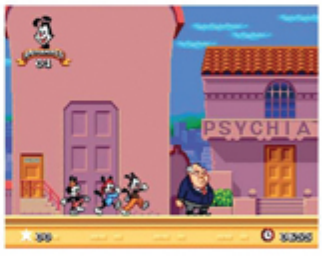
ALTHOUGH IN HINDSIGHT Andre Agassi was a no-brainer when it came to a licensed tennis game, when Andre Agassi Tennis was being developed he hadn't actually won any Grand Slams yet. As luck would have it, he finally won Wimbledon in 1992, the same year his grinning face appeared on the cover of this Mega Drive game. Agassi is the only licensed player featured here, meaning the other seven tennis 'pros' in the game are fictional characters with names like Cassie Nova and Bob 'Bit' Chin. There are four different tournaments on the game – one each on grass, clay, hard and indoor courts – and there's also the option to play a Skins tournament, where the stakes double every time the ball crosses the net. ■

FACT

Agassi ended up winning eight Grand Slams: the Australian Open four times, the US Open twice, and Wimbledon and the French Open once each.

ANIMANIACS

Year 1994
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami



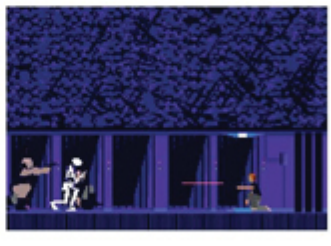
KONAMI RELEASED TWO completely different Animaniacs for the Mega Drive and SNES. While the latter had three-dimensional stages and allowed players to move in eight directions, the Mega Drive version was a more standard side-scrolling platformer. Our heroes Yakko, Wakko and Dot have to infiltrate four film sets – a western, a *Star Wars* style sci-fi, an *Indiana Jones* style adventure and a horror movie – and steal important props so they can open their own shop and sell them. All three characters are on-screen at the same time and the player controls the 'leader', who they can swap between at will to use their unique skill: Yakko can push and pull boxes, Wakko can destroy blocks and Dot can blow kisses to charm enemies out of the way. ■

FACT

According to voice actor Rob Paulsen, the ridiculous *Yakko's World* song (YouTube it) in which Yakko sings the names of most countries on Earth was recorded in a single take.

ANOTHER WORLD

Year 1993
Publisher Virgin Games
Developer Delphine Software



WHEN LESTER KNIGHT Chaykin's particle accelerator experiment is hit by a bolt of lightning, the scientist is instantly teleported to a different reality (or Another World, if you will). With no known way of getting back home, Lester has to deal with the hostile creatures he quickly encounters in this strange new place. Another World (known as Out of This World in North America) is best known for its vector-based art style, which gave the game a polygonal look long before it became commonplace in gaming. By making use of a technique called rotoscoping to add realistic animations to the mix, Another World gained critical acclaim for its unique presentation, even if the trial-and-error nature of the gameplay had fewer fans. ■

FACT

Another World's creator Éric Chahi developed the game and its story in a linear order, which meant when he started he didn't know Lester would befriend an alien companion.

THE AQUATIC GAMES STARRING JAMES POND AND THE AQUABATS

Year 1992
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Millennium Interactive

TAKING A BREAK from his series of action platformers (which can be found later in this book), special FI5H agent James Pond has decided to put his badge and gun in storage and set up the Aquatic Games, a water-based Olympic Games rip-off in which he and his chums take part in eight comedy events. James himself takes part in three of them: the 100m Splash (a race through a river), the Bouncy Castle (which is like trampolining) and Shell Shooting (where you have to flip shells, catch them and use them to burst balloons). Joining him are his fishy pals like F-fortesque Frog, Mark the Shark, Freddie Starfish and Ceceelia the Seal, each of whom have their own unique events too. ■

FACT

Much like the second James Pond game Robocod, The Aquatic Games is sponsored by Penguin biscuits, the logo for which appears at the top of results screens.

ARCADE CLASSICS

Year 1996
Publisher Sega
Developer Al Baker & Associates

THIS COMPILATION CARTRIDGE attempts to recreate three classic Atari games: the Atari 7800 version of Centipede, the Atari 2600 version of Missile Command and the standalone home system Ultra Pong. The key word here is 'attempts', because although Al Baker and his Associates took the original games' assembly language code and converted it to the Mega Drive (via a Game Gear port), the games don't play perfectly due to some fairly heavy slowdown. This is partly due to the option to play each game in a 'Sega graphics' mode, which adds extra visual detail. Its effectiveness is questionable, though, as sometimes these additions can be distracting, such as the garish grass pattern added to the background in Centipede. ■

FACT

The manual gives the same plot for Missile Command as the Atari 2600 version: a war between your planet of Zardon and the alien planet Krytol. The arcade version didn't have this plot.

ARCH RIVALS

Year 1992
Publisher Flying Edge
Developer Arc Developments

ARCH RIVALS IS considered by many to be the ancestor of NBA Jam, a claim given extra credibility by the fact that the arcade versions of both were developed by Midway. This Mega Drive port is a fairly accurate one: playing as one of four randomly chosen teams (Chicago, LA, Brawl State or Natural High), you get to choose your player and your CPU-controlled teammate before taking to the court for some rules-free basketball. Any concept of a non-contact sport goes right out the window, as you're allowed to punch opponents in the face or dive at them, tackling them to the ground, without any danger of a foul being called. As the cover says, 'it's a real basket brawl'. If you see what they did there. ■

FACT

The arcade version had a 'Hometown Heroes' option that would let arcade owners change the team names and uniforms to those of local teams.

ARCUS ODYSSEY

Year 1991
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Wolf Team

A THOUSAND YEARS after the evil sorceress Castomira was banished to the Dark World, her followers have captured a magical sword called the Power of Leaty, which was created to kill her if she ever returned. With the sword now in evil's hands there's nothing stopping Castomira's return: nothing, that is, except for four brave warriors bold enough to fight their way through eight 'acts', find Castomira and send her back to the Dark World. Arcus Odyssey is an isometric action RPG where players choose one of the four characters and either go it alone or fight with a friend in co-op. At the end, you can choose whether to defeat Castomira or give her your power and let her reign over the world. ■

FACT

A SNES version of Arcus Odyssey was going to be released in Europe by French publisher Loriciels, but it was scrapped when Sega bought Renovation Products.

ARIEL THE LITTLE MERMAID

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer BlueSky Software

BEFORE ALADDIN LAUNCHED and Virgin Games became the studio of choice for turning Disney's movie output into Mega Drive games, a game based on *The Little Mermaid* was developed by Californian studio BlueSky Software. Its plot has nothing to do with the movie: instead, players can choose to play as either Ariel or her old man King Triton as they attempt to rescue the other one from the evil Ursula. Ariel can defeat enemies with the power of her voice, while Triton fires thunderbolts instead (which is a bold thing to do underwater). The aim of this fairly easy game is to find and free all the merpeople in each of its five stages, culminating with a final battle against Ursula. ■

FACT

The Little Mermaid ended a creatively dry spell for Disney: it was the first Disney film to win an Academy Award since *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* 18 years earlier.

ARNOLD PALMER TOURNAMENT GOLF

Year 1989
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

ONE WAY IN which Sega tried to differentiate itself from Nintendo in the 16-bit era was its willingness to licence the names of celebrity athletes and attach them to exclusive games you could only get on a Sega system. Arnold Palmer Tournament Golf was one of the earliest examples of this, even though Palmer himself doesn't appear anywhere beyond the title screen. It's a competent golf game with three courses set in the USA, Japan and Great Britain, and lets you either practice a course or take part in a longer Tournament mode where you take on 12 separate rounds. Unlike most modern golf games you're not told the maximum distance of each club, so many players (this writer included) used to sit with the manual beside them. ■

FACT

Hit 100 shots on a hole without reaching the green and you'll get a Game Over screen. Enter the Konami code here and you'll be given a playable single-screen version of Fantasy Zone.

ARROW FLASH

Year 1990
Publisher Renovation Products / Sega
Developer I.T.L.

YOU MAY BE surprised to learn that Vikings return near the end of the thirtieth century, and start plundering and destroying planets all around the galaxy. After a doctor's failed experiment creates a large magnetic field around Earth, it attracts the attention of the 'Viking Terrorists' (it says in the manual). Only the doctor's granddaughter, Zana Keene, can save the day by piloting the Chameleon, a space fighter capable of transforming into a robot. Arrow Flash is a side-scrolling shoot 'em up where you can switch between a ship and a mech at any point by pressing the A button. The ship is smaller and harder to hit, but the mech moves faster and can perform the titular Arrow Flash, an invincible dash attack. ■

FACT

For seemingly no reason, the European manual renames everything: now the protagonist is Anna Schwinn, she's the doctor's daughter, and her ship is simply called Arrow Flash.

ART ALIVE!

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Western Technologies

THIS ART PACKAGE predates Nintendo's Mario Paint by a year, but also predates its idea of including mouse support. As such, players are stuck with their trusty controller as they attempt to create their works of art. As well as the standard drawing and filling tools, there are a series of colouring book style line drawings that players can colour in with the fill tool. Players can also apply stamps to their pictures, including images of Sonic the Hedgehog and ToeJam & Earl. You can even create your own animated sprites, though there's no option to actually save any of your creations: instead, the manual recommends that you should set your console up to a VCR so you can record your artwork on video for posterity. ■

FACT

One UK magazine at the time declared that the game 'should be called Ass Alive, because it's so crap'.

ART OF FIGHTING

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer SNK

AFTER DIPPING ITS toe into the arcade fighting game market with Fatal Fury in 1991, SNK decided to launch a second fighter in arcades a year later. Art of Fighting is a prequel of sorts to Fatal Fury and tells the story of two karate experts, Ryo Sakazaki (whose sister Yuri has been kidnapped by a criminal mastermind called Mr Big) and his friend Robert Garcia. The single-player Story mode only lets players choose between Ryo and Robert, as they punch and kick their way through a series of other fighters in search for Yuri. The two-player versus mode, however, offers all 10 characters to choose from, including boss fighters Mr Big and the ominous Mr Karate. It supports six-button controllers. ■

FACT

Takashi Nishiyama, who created the original Street Fighter game, worked on Art of Fighting. He's stated on record that Ryo is a tribute to Street Fighter's Ryu.

ASTERIX AND THE GREAT RESCUE

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Core Design

THE YEAR IS 50bc. In an attempt to take over the small Gaulish village that continues to resist the Roman invasion, Caesar sends a group of Roman soldiers to kidnap Getafix, the druid who makes the magic potion that gives the Gauls their strength. It's up to Asterix and his pal Obelix (whose pet Dogmatix has also been kidnapped) to head off on a rescue mission. Playing as either Asterix or Obelix, this platformer takes you through the Gaulish village, a Roman encampment, a forest, Germany, a Roman galley and finally Rome itself, where Caesar makes you fight a pair of tigers before for some reason just handing over Getafix and Dogmatix without much of a quarrel. ■

FACT

Asterix writer René Goscinny died halfway through the creation of Asterix in Belgium. After he found out, artist Albert Uderzo made the skies dark and rainy in the panel he was working on, and continued this until the end of the book.

ASTERIX AND THE POWER OF THE GODS

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Core Design

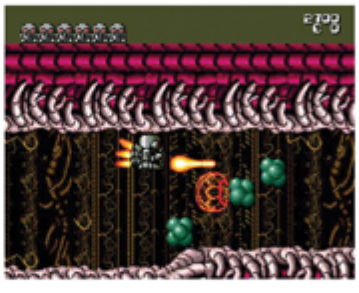
CORE DESIGN RETURNED late in the Mega Drive's life for another crack at an Asterix game. After the leader of the Gauls, Vercingetorix, loses at the Siege of Alesia, he throws his arms at Caesar's feet. Before long his legendary shield goes missing and it's feared that Caesar now has his hands on it and is planning to use it to destroy that one remaining Gaulish village. Once again players get to choose between Asterix and Obelix, but this time the adventure isn't entirely linear: instead, you can choose which level to take on first. This choice is a bit of an illusion, though, as it soon emerges that you still need to complete them in a certain order to remove obstacles in each stage. ■

FACT

Vercingetorix was a real king who united the Gauls to fight against Roman forces. He was caught, paraded through Rome and executed, which is far from ideal.

ATOMIC ROBO-KID

Year 1990
Publisher Treco
Developer Treco



THIS IS AN interesting mix between a platformer and a shoot 'em up. Playing as the titular Atomic Robo-Kid, you have to blast your way through six stages as you try to reach and defeat each of the enormous robot 'governors' that rule your outpost. While the Robo-Kid's main method of movement is using its jet boosters to fly through the sky, you can also land and walk along the ground if you like. Along the way you'll come across 'Crystal Flies'. Shoot these and you'll be able to collect one of four new weapons: a powerful Fission Gun, a Missile (which can fire in any direction but has a short range), a 3-Way shot and a 5-Way shot. ■

FACT

The original arcade version of the game contains an elaborate cheat code which reveals a message from chief programmer Toshio Arai. It lists his full address and says: 'I want to hear from you.'

ATOMIC RUNNER

Year 1992
Publisher Data East / Sega
Developer Data East

LONG BEFORE THE endless runner genre graced many a mobile phone, Data East's Atomic Runner (initially known in arcades as Atomic Runner Chelnov) was treating players to its own perpetually pelting protagonist. Aliens who secretly invaded Earth thousands of years ago have returned to claim what they believe is rightfully theirs, so it's up to you to don your Atomic Suit and blast them to bits, all without stopping to take a breather. Released four years after it first came to arcades, Atomic Runner is one of the few games of its era with a home version that looks better than the coin-op original. It's a difficult game, though the fact the Options screen lets you choose to have up to 15 lives helps this somewhat. ■

FACT

The arcade version was about a coal miner who survives a nuclear power plant explosion. After criticism that the plot and Chelnov name were too similar to the Chernobyl disaster, Data East changed them for the Mega Drive version in the west.

ATP TOUR CHAMPIONSHIP TENNIS

Year 1994
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer SIMS

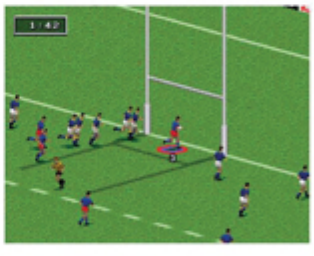
ONE OF THE issues that surrounds many tennis games is the lack of official licensing, inevitably leading to a large roster of generic characters. Not so with Sega's official ATP Tour game, which contains 40 real-life players: 32 current (at the time) and eight retired. The main ATP Tour mode has you creating a new character from scratch and taking them from the bottom of the ATP rankings to the top, taking on the likes of Pete Sampras, John McEnroe, Stefan Edberg and Ivan Lendl along the way. There's also an ATP Senior Tour mode, which is a quarter-final knockout bracket containing the eight retired players, who include Arthur Ashe, Ilie Nastase and Stan Smith. ■

FACT

ATP Tour contains some impressive voice sampling: the umpire refers to all 40 players by their real names, which shows admirable attention to detail.

AUSTRALIAN RUGBY LEAGUE

Year 1994
Publisher EA Sports
Developer I-Space Interactive



FOLLOWING ON FROM its Rugby World Cup 1995 game – which is found later in this book and was essentially a rugby union game using the FIFA engine – EA decided to tweak things a little and release another rugby title: this time one with rugby league rules, focused mainly on the Australian Rugby League. As well as all 20 official ARL teams at the time (just their logos and names, not actual player names), the game also includes the New South Wales Blues and Queensland Maroons who feature in the annual State of Origin series. For the non-Aussies interested in playing, there are also unofficial representations of the 12 Super League teams and eight international teams. ■

FACT

The game's code has a secret message at the end that reads: 'Dave was here!' This is likely to be David Burton, the Associate Producer and Technical Specialist.

AWESOME POSSUM KICKS DR MACHINO'S BUTT!

Year 1993
Publisher Tengen
Developer Tengen

THE EVIL DR Machino has created an army of robots designed to find parts of the planet that haven't already been polluted by humans and ruin them too. Earth's last hope is Awesome Possum, an extremely talkative anthropomorphic didelphid (yes, I looked it up) dedicated to cleaning up the world and, indeed, booting Dr Machino's rump. There are four different worlds to explore – the rainforest, sea caverns, Arctic Circle and Dr Machino's domain – and along the way you have to collect as many newspapers and aluminium cans as you can (to recycle them, you see). After each level, you'll be given a trivia question about the environment, and you'll get extra points if you get it right. ■

FACT

'The questions and answers were received from a variety of sources and are believed to be accurate,' the manual says, 'but don't freak out if one or two turn out to be wrong.' So now you know.

AWS PRO MOVES SOCCER

Year 1994
Publisher Asciiware
Developer Zyrinx

IT'S NOT OFTEN you get a football game released in North America but not in Europe, yet that's exactly what we have here. AWS Pro Moves Soccer contains 32 international teams, although some of the choices are a little unusual: Indonesia and Cuba aren't normally considered footballing powerhouses. There are Exhibition and Tournament options available, and the game supports a 6-button controller, making use of the X, Y and Z buttons to perform special moves like 'head shots' (i.e. headers). Players are a bit on the slippery side, making one wonder whether Asciiware would have had more success making an ice hockey game instead, especially because it struggles with the rules here (it's possible to foul the referee and win a free kick for it). ■

FACT

If you aren't familiar with AWS, that's because it's fictional: it stands for Asciiware World Sports. There were no other AWS games.

AYRTON SENNA'S SUPER MONACO GP II

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

THE SEQUEL TO Sega's Super Monaco GP may still not have featured the official F1 licence, but it did at least secure the talents of its best racer at the time, the legendary Ayrton Senna. Although it wasn't official it tried its best to be as close as possible: the World Championship mode consists of 16 races, with each track appearing in the same order it did during the 1991 F1 World Championship season, which Senna won in real life (the other racers' names are fake). There's also a Senna GP mode, which gives the player another three tracks to choose from: two of these are fictional and the other is Fazenda Dois Lagos, Senna's personal kart racing track in Tatuí, São Paulo. ■

FACT

The endorsement was more fitting than you may think: at the time of writing, Senna has won the actual Monaco Grand Prix more times than any other racer (six).

BACK TO THE FUTURE PART III

Year 1991
Publisher Arena Entertainment
Developer Probe Software

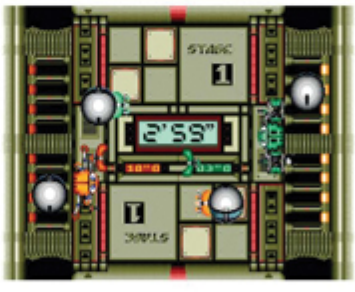
BASED ON THE worst film in the *Back to the Future* trilogy, the Mega Drive adaptation of Part III consists of four completely different stages. The first casts you as Doc Brown on horseback as he tries to avoid pretty much every obstacle in the Wild West in an attempt to reach his lady friend Clara before her train falls into a ravine. The second is a shooting gallery where you have to reach a target score. The third is an isometric section where you have to throw pies at Buford Tannen and his goons, and the final stage is a side-scrolling action platformer atop a speeding train. The first stage's notorious difficulty drew heavy criticism at the time. ■

FACT

The ending is rather motivational: 'Your future hasn't been written yet, no one's has. It's whatever you make it, so make it a good one… all of you.'

BALL JACKS

Year 1993
Publisher Namco
Developer Namco



IN THE YEAR 7650, a sports tournament is held 'on a spacewide scale' with the prize being unspeakable wealth. The sport in question is Ball Jacks, a one-on-one contest in which players control robot crab things sitting in front of conveyor belts. Each player's belt starts with two large metal balls sitting on it, and the aim is to use your robot crab's extendable arms to grab your opponent's balls (steady) and pull them over to your belt. To make things more interesting, you can slap your balls out of your opponent's claws and even damage them by hitting them with your balls. This forces them to drop their robot into a pit area for a while, leaving the play area free for you to steal all the balls. ■

FACT

Ball Jacks was notoriously given a score of 9 per cent by UK magazine *Mega*, with reviewer Andy Dyer stating: 'I'm a bit wound up about this, this… crap. I'm going home before I hit someone.'

BALLZ 3D

Year 1994
Publisher Accolade
Developer PF Magic

THE MEGA DRIVE wasn't quite able to handle polygonal games (a handful of exceptions aside), so how was developer PF Magic going to take advantage of the 3D fighting game craze taking over arcades at the time? The answer was Ballz, a one-on-one fighter in which each of the 14 characters is made out of balls (including a clown called Boomer, a caveman called Kronk and a hefty sumo wrestler with the questionable name of Tsunami). This strange design choice actually lends the game a unique look, and the ability to move around the area in three dimensions certainly gives things a similar feel to the likes of Virtua Fighter, even if it doesn't necessarily play as well. ■

FACT

A special 'Director's Cut' edition of Ballz 3D was released on the Panasonic 3DO, with improved graphics and a new zombie fighter.

BARBIE: SUPER MODEL

Year 1993
Publisher Hi-Tech Expressions
Developer Tahoe Software

THE NATIONAL SUPER Model Competition is coming, and Barbie has been invited to take part. Naturally, she's pretty pumped about the whole situation but she needs to prepare if she's going to end up winning the prize. Whatever that is. There are four levels in this game, each representing a different location: Hollywood, Hawaii, Vail and New York. Barbie has to make her way through each area in her car, rollerskates, skis or bike respectively, while also taking on a trio of mini-games. The Dressing Room and Hair Salon games ask you to memorise a magazine cover and recreate the style on Barbie, whereas the Runway asks you to perform a set sequence of controller inputs to look your best for the audience. ■

FACT

Since Barbie made her debut at the American Toy Fair in New York in 1959, more than one billion dolls have been sold.

BARKLEY SHUT UP AND JAM!

Year 1994
Publisher Sport Accolade
Developer Accolade

WITH MIDWAY'S NBA Jam taking the arcades by storm and a home version in development, Accolade decided it wanted to get in on the action too (even throwing the word 'Jam' in there just in case there was any doubt). A deal was done to licence Charles Barkley, who was at the top of his game with the Phoenix Suns at the time, and a suspiciously NBA Jam-like two-on-two basketball game was created. There were some notable differences, though: rather than playing in professional courts, Shut Up and Jam! took place on a series of street courts. Barkley was also the game's sole licensed player, which meant the other 15 playable characters were completely fictional, with names like Sweet Pea and Chilly. ■

FACT

Early copies of NBA Jam on the SNES and Mega Drive featured Barkley in the Suns. When the Shut Up and Jam! deal was signed he had to be pulled, so later versions of NBA Jam replaced him with Dan Majerle.

BARKLEY SHUT UP AND JAM! 2

Year 1995
Publisher Sport Accolade
Developer Accolade

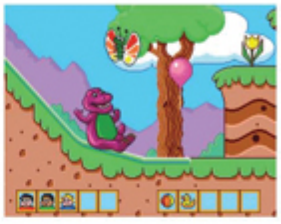
THE CRITICAL RESPONSE to Shut Up and Jam! was mixed, but that didn't dissuade Accolade from having a second go at it (albeit only on the Mega Drive this time: there was no SNES version like there was with the original). In many ways it's similar to its predecessor: once again you're playing two-on-two basketball on a variety of street-based courts. One crucial difference, however, is that this time you can't actually play as Charles Barkley himself: instead, you choose from a selection of 10 fictional characters and play a tournament, which consists of eight different matches against Sir Charles' team (which includes numerous other non-playable characters). An odd decision, then, to prevent fans from playing as their hero. ■

FACT

There is actually an odd way to play as Barkley. Pause the game, highlight Quit, press B, B, B, then go back to Resume and press Start. All four characters will turn into Barkley.

BARNEY'S HIDE & SEEK GAME

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Realtime Associates



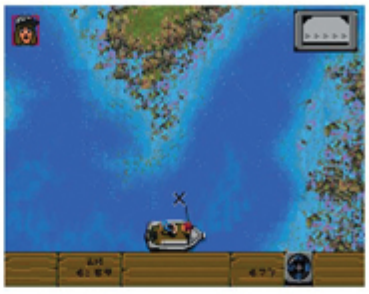
THIS EDUCATIONAL GAME is a platformer starring Barney the purple dinosaur, released during the height of his '90s popularity. Players guide Barney through four levels (a forest, a music town, under the sea and a farm) as they try to find four hiding children, his friend Baby Bop and five hidden presents. It's impossible to kill Barney in this game, and if players are too young to even control him they can put the controller down and it will play itself to completion. Barney can also fire love hearts out of his soulless mouth, which let you interact with various objects and creatures dotted around each stage. Barney voice actor Bob West recorded more than 200 phrases for the game, none of which is 'please end this'. ■

FACT

Barney & Friends was originally only going to last for 30 episodes until the Barney Fan Club told parents to write to and phone their local PBD station demanding more. A total of 268 episodes were made.

BASS MASTERS CLASSIC

Year 1994
Publisher THQ
Developer Black Pearl Software



IF YOU LIKE the idea of fishing but don't want to worry about the weather, buying all the equipment and actually doing the fishing itself, BASS Masters Classic attempts to digitise the pastime so you can experience it from the comfort of your own sofa. The BASS Masters Classic is a tour consisting of four three-day tournaments, each taking place at a different lake. A bait shop lets you stock up on different lures, lines, rods, reels, sonars and engines, and then it's off on your boat to try and catch the biggest bass you can. There are nine different fictional anglers to choose between, ranging from 'Doc' Holiday (so called because 'he's got hands like a surgeon') to Bonnie B. Wild ('she's a tough gal, but that doesn't help her in fishing'). ■

FACT

BASS Masters Classic was also released on the SNES. Despite having the same developer, each version has completely different playable characters.

BASS MASTERS CLASSIC: PRO EDITION

Year 1995
Publisher THQ
Developer Black Pearl Software

JUST IN CASE you didn't get all the bass fishing out of your system with the original BASS Masters Classic, THQ returned a year later with this enhanced update which adds some reel-life (sorry) fishing pros to the equation. You can now choose between one of six actual pro bass anglers, from Red Man 1995 Angler of the Year Dee Thomas, to the iconic Kevin VanDam, who famously specialises in roundhouse kicking fish in the face (I may have lied about that bit). The Pro Edition builds on the standard edition by introducing a new lake, new bait types – you're in luck, 'jigging spoon' fans – new sonars and the like. There are also new original characters to play as, in case you despise the real guys. ■

FACT

According to fishing lure manufacturer Rapala, a jigging spoon is a lure designed to look like 'a crippled or distressed fish', which is pleasant.

BATMAN

Year 1991
Publisher Sunsoft / Sega
Developer Sega

WHEN THE *BATMAN* movie launched, Sunsoft nabbed the licence and proceeded to make completely unique games for the NES, Game Boy, TurboGrafx-16 and Mega Drive. The Sega version is an action platformer that follows the plot of the movie relatively closely, with six stages covering the film's most notable locations including the streets of Gotham, the Axis Chemical Factory, the Flugelheim Museum and Gotham Cathedral. As well as punching his enemies, Batman is armed with a grappling hook and a limited number of batarangs. It isn't all platforming, however: the fourth and fifth stages mainly consist of shoot 'em up sections in which you control the Batmobile and Batwing respectively on your way to rescue Vicki Vale from the Joker. ■

FACT

In the movie, Batman tries to stop Jack Napier from falling into the vat of chemicals that transforms him into the Joker. In the game you actually shoot him into the vat.

BATMAN FOREVER

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Probe Entertainment

PROBE ENTERTAINMENT HAD previously worked on the Mega Drive ports of Mortal Kombat and Mortal Kombat II, so when it came to making an action platformer based on the third Batman movie, it decided to see what would happen if Mortal Kombat was a side-scroller. The connection is immediately obvious to anyone familiar with the fighting series: Batman, Robin and the numerous enemies in the game were all real actors photographed and digitised into the game, while many of Mortal Kombat's trademark moves (including its iconic uppercut) were also brought over to make up the combat repertoire of your hero of choice. Unfortunately, it was something of a 'square peg and round hole' situation and neither Mortal Kombat fans nor Batman devotees were impressed by its clunky controls. ■

FACT

UK shop Woolworths sold a special edition of the game, complete with a 'making of' VHS and Batman notepad. It sold so badly that they can now sell for over £1,000.

BATMAN RETURNS

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Malibu Interactive

WHEREAS THE SNES Batman Returns game was a Konami-developed beat 'em up, the Mega Drive got an entirely different game: an action platformer published by Sega. Rather than following the plot from the beginning, it starts roughly halfway into the movie, after the Penguin has killed Gotham's Ice Princess with a deadly swarm of bats and framed Batman in the process. You have to make your way through five 'acts' – Gotham City, Shreck's Wonderland, the Red Triangle Circus, the sewers and the Penguin's lair – defeating goons and criminals along the way, until you reach and defeat the Penguin. Along the way you'll also encounter Catwoman and do battle with her a number of times, which you could probably do without. ■

FACT

One of Batman's weapons in the game is a swarm of bats, which probably isn't the best choice when you're trying to convince people you didn't kill someone using that very method.

BATMAN: REVENGE OF THE JOKER

Year 1992
Publisher Sunsoft
Developer Ringler Studios

THIS IS A remake of sorts of Batman: Return of the Joker, the NES game released a year earlier. Like its 8-bit sibling, it's based on the *Batman* comic series rather than any of the movies or TV series, and has Batman travelling to the Joker's secret hideaway to stop him stealing precious metals from Gotham's mines: metals that, conveniently, can be used to build explosives. This action platformer consists of seven stages, culminating in a final battle with the Joker on his aforementioned hideaway, an island called Ha-Hacienda. Batman is armed with a 'wrist projector' which can act like four different weapons: a batarang launcher, a crossbow, a sonic neutraliser and a shield star launcher. At the end, the island explodes: so that's that, then. ■

FACT

Although this game is based on the *Batman* comics, it still has you riding the Batmobile and Batwing from the 1989 movie, which no doubt made some fans of the canon absolutely livid.

BATTLEMASTER

Year 1991
Publisher Arena Entertainment
Developer Nick Pelling

WHEN THE ELVES, Dwarves, Humans and Orcs all had a big falling out, the Age of Conflict began. The resulting war and poverty devastated all four races, until the mysterious Watcher turned up at the central Aran's Tower. Playing as one of 16 potential heroes, you have to visit all four kingdoms, collecting their magic crowns and handing them to the Watcher so he can merge them all and create peace again. Battlemaster is an isometric action game where you have to fight hostile citizens in each kingdom in order to bring them under control. As you progress you can recruit up to four followers who'll fight alongside you: these followers can be given simple tactics to follow, like standing in formations or pushing forward or back. ■

FACT

Battlemaster's cover was illustrated by fantasy artist Chris Achilleos. He's infamous for his controversial album cover for Whitesnake's Lovehunter, which shows a naked woman straddling a large serpent.

BATTLE SQUADRON

Year 1990
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Innerprise Software

THIS SHOOT 'EM up was originally released on the Amiga and was the work of 17-year-old Danish developer Martin Pedersen. Playing as an unnamed member of the titular Battle Squadron, you had out on a rescue mission to free Barry Mayers and Lori Bergin, two Earth Defence Commanders who are being held hostage by evil Barrax forces. Battle Squadron is notorious for its difficulty: even the most basic enemies need multiple shots to kill and there's no autofire function. It also has a unique approach to difficulty: rather than the usual Easy, Normal and Hard choices, the Options menu instead lets you set the maximum number of enemy bullets on-screen at any time, as well as the speed of their bullets. ■

FACT

UK magazine *Amiga Computing* had recently given Xenon II a score of 100 per cent but decided they liked Battle Squadron better, so it was scored 109 per cent.

BATTLETECH

Year 1994
Publisher Extreme Entertainment Group
Developer Malibu Interactive

THE SEQUEL TO the SNES-only game MechWarrior – the SNES version of this is called MechWarrior 3050 – this ditches its predecessor's first-person viewpoint for an isometric perspective. You play as a warrior of the Clan Wolf who puts themselves forward to pilot the Madcat Heavy OmniMech, a huge mech capable of mass destruction. It's up to you to take on a bunch of near-suicide missions to infiltrate the forces of your enemy, the Inner Sphere, buying some time for the Clans to choose a new leader to prevent civil war breaking out. The game's isometric viewpoint makes it look and play extremely similar to EA's Desert Strike, albeit with more complex controls such as the ability to aim in one direction while walking in another. ■

FACT

The first MechWarrior game was a first-person action game released on PCs in 1989. Although the SNES game released in 1993 has the same title, they're completely different.

BATTLETOADS

Year 1993
Publisher Tradewest / Sega
Developer Arc System Works

TWO YEARS AFTER Rare's Battletoads made its debut on the NES, it was ported to the Mega Drive by Japanese studio Arc System Works. As in the 8-bit version, you play as Battletoads Rash (player one) and Zitz (player two) as they try to rescue their third member, Pimple, and Princess Angelica from the sinister Dark Queen. While the majority of Battletoads is a beat 'em up, one of the game's most notable features is the way it regularly jumps to other gameplay styles. One minute you're descending downwards through a huge crater, the next you're taking part in the game's notorious speeder bike or turbo jet sections. The Mega Drive version is significantly easier than the notoriously difficult NES one. ■

FACT

If you think the Battletoads name is a little hokey, think yourself lucky – the original working title for the game was the far worse: Amphibianz.

BATTLETOADS & DOUBLE DRAGON

Year 1993
Publisher Tradewest
Developer Rare

AFTER THE BATTLETOADS firmly booted the Dark Queen's rump at the end of their first adventure, she ran off to the outer reaches of the universe to lick her wounds. It isn't long before she returns, however, and this time she isn't alone: she's teamed up with the Shadow Boss, the (non-canon) enemy of Billy and Jimmy Lee, the Double Dragons. It's up to Zitz, Rash, Pimple, Billy and Jimmy to all team up and take down the Dark Queen, the Shadow Boss and all their combined minions. This is essentially a Battletoads game with Double Dragon characters included, meaning fans of the froggy threesome should feel more at home than fans of the… um, dragony duo. ■

FACT

According to the July 1994 issue of *Sega Power* magazine, Sony was due to publish the game in Europe but decided not to after reading negative review scores.

BEAST WRESTLER

Year 1991
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Telenet Japan / Riot

THIS RELATIVELY OBSCURE title reads on paper like it should be great. Set in the distant year 2020, it has you trying to become the 'dragon warrior' by taking your giant dragon monster thing to a big arena and trying to wrestle a bunch of other monsters to the death. With beast designs by Kamen Rider contributor Yasushi Nirasawa (who later created creatures in Shin Megami Tensei IV), a Fire Pro Wrestling style combat system and an interesting fusion feature where you can occasionally take a fallen beast's DNA and splice it with your own to evolve it, Beast Wrestler had a lot of potential. Sadly, that's all it had: the poor collision detection and slow pace led to it being roundly trashed by critics. ■

FACT

Beast Wrestler is called Beast Warriors in Japan. If you look closely, you can still see the outline of the word 'Warriors' in the opening animation before the title appears on top of it.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: BELLE'S QUEST

Year 1993
Publisher Sunsoft
Developer Software Creations

WHEN SUNSOFT ACQUIRED the video game licence to make Beauty and the Beast games for Sega consoles, it decided to go wild and make two: one aimed at girls and one aimed at boys. The former has you playing as Belle as she searches for true love and adventure. Although it's presented as a straight platformer, it's actually got its fair share of puzzles: the first stage, for example, has you wandering the village in search of a way to make the dried up fountain start producing water again, while the second is a forest maze. Beat all four stages and you dance with the Beast as you collect falling petals – because games for girls and such. ■

FACT

UK magazine *Mega* gave the game 20 per cent in an import review, stating that 'even ignoring [its] loathsome marketing ploy, it has to be said, and said quite plainly for that matter, that the game beneath the ribbons sucks big time'.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: ROAR OF THE BEAST

Year 1993
Publisher Sunsoft
Developer Software Creations

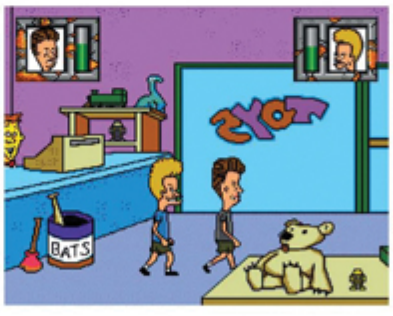
ALTHOUGH GIRL GAMERS were perhaps patronised a tad by having their own female-friendly Beauty and the Beast game bestowed upon them, they ultimately got the last laugh because Sunsoft's other offering – the one aimed at boys – is arguably a weaker game. Naturally, this time you're playing as the Beast, as you play through the movie's plot from his perspective. Like its pink partner, there are four stages here too, though there's more of a focus on combat. It's here where Roar of the Beast's issues become clear, as its questionable collision detection makes your countless battles against seemingly every animal in the entire forest fairly frustrating. Still, you at least get to kill Gaston in this one. ■

FACT

Roar of the Beast didn't fare much better with the UK press. *Sega Power* imported it and gave it 39 per cent, requesting: 'Someone call the vet, it's about time the Beast was neutered before he spawns any more unwanted offspring.'

BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD

Year 1994
Publisher Viacom New Media
Developer Radical Entertainment



BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD want to see their favourite band GWAR, but when their neighbour's poodle eats their tickets and spits them out into said neighbour's lawn mower, the pieces go flying all over town. Time to get the tickets back and piece them together before the concert starts. Whereas the Beavis and Butt-Head game on the SNES was a straight platformer, the Mega Drive version is instead a platformer with puzzle elements similar to a point-and-click game. You can switch between the two at any time, which is useful when one character's 'attention span' (i.e. their health) is low. Alternatively, two players can play cooperatively and control both of the young chaps at the same time. ■

FACT

The manual makes fun of the credits page by including a note handwritten by Butt-Head that reads: 'Uh, me and Beavis did everything.'

THE BERENSTAIN BEARS' CAMPING ADVENTURE

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Realtime Associates

MUCH-LOVED CHILDREN'S LITERATURE family the *Berenstain Bears* have gone on a camping trip, which seems a little redundant given that they're bears. After dinner, Papa and Mama Bear allow Brother and Sister Bear to go out exploring in the woods for a while, and that's pretty much as in-depth as this plot goes. Playing as either Brother or Sister Bear (or both at the same time in two-player co-op), you have to make your way through five different trails – a cave, a nature walk, a mountain stream, the treetops and a haunted forest – while avoiding the various critters who haven't taken kindly to you. Despite clearly being aimed at younger gamers, this is a competent platformer. ■

FACT

The Berenstain Bears are a common example of the Mandela effect, a shared false memory that many people have: in this case, that their name was spelled 'Berenstein' (it never was).

BEST OF THE BEST: CHAMPIONSHIP KARATE

Year 1993
Publisher Electro Brain
Developer Loriciel

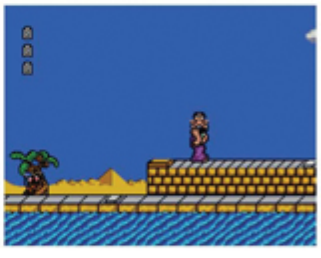
DESPITE THE TITLE, this is actually a kickboxing game: it was originally released on home computers under the name Panza Kick Boxing, and the Mega Drive version was simply known as The Kick Boxing in Japan. Not to be confused with the 1989 martial arts film of the same name, Best of the Best starts you off as the 16th best fighter in the world and tasks you with working your way up the ranks until you are, for want of a better phrase, the best of the best. As you progress through the game you'll eventually be invited to take part in the 'Kumate', a no-holds barred match with no rounds, no referee and no rules. ■

FACT

Best of the Best supports Sega's ill-fated Activator controller, where players stand on an octagonal platform and punch and kick in the air. It's so convoluted that the manual takes up four pages explaining how it works.

BIBLE ADVENTURES

Year 1994
Publisher Wisdom Tree
Developer Wisdom Tree



ALTHOUGH MOST RELIGIOUS games in North America were developed for the NES, the Genesis wasn't entirely spared. Case in point: this graphically improved version of Bible Adventures, which also graced Nintendo's 8-bit console. There are three biblical adventures to play through here, each using a central 'pick things up and carry them around' mechanic. Noah's Ark has you picking up animals and taking them to your ark, Save Baby Moses involves carrying a young Moses to a small ark so you can sail him down the Nile, and David and Goliath tasks you with gathering sheep for a while before taking on Goliath himself. Throughout each adventure you can collect a bunch of stone tablets: these give you hints and bible quotes (or 'biblical inspiration', as the manual puts it). ■

FACT

Just in case you aren't up on your Bible knowledge, Noah didn't actually carry a stack of five animals above his head like he can in this game.

BILL WALSH COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Year 1993
Publisher EA Sports
Developer High Score Productions

EA'S SUCCESS WITH the John Madden series was clear for all to see, but the NFL wasn't the only brand of American football that enjoyed huge popularity. This led to the creation of Bill Walsh College Football, a Madden spin-off that used the same game engine but instead featured 24 college football teams, and 24 all-time great college teams (Baton Rouge '87, Alabama '78 and the like). While the game mainly played just like Madden, some college-specific features were added such as the two-point conversion (which the NFL hadn't yet adopted) and the wishbone formation. With no official collegiate licence, teams were named after cities instead of college names (such as Columbus instead of Ohio State, and Los Angeles instead of UCLA). ■

FACT

Bill Walsh was the head coach of the San Francisco 49ers from 1979–1989, winning the Super Bowl with them three times.

BILL WALSH COLLEGE FOOTBALL 95

Year 1994
Publisher EA Sports
Developer High Score Productions

AS WELL-RECEIVED AS the first Bill Walsh game was, there was still room for improvement, hence the inevitable follow-up a year later. The '95 instalment's most notable change is a deal with the Collegiate Licensing Company, which now means that each of the teams has their real name and nickname, their real logo and their real team colours. With this comes an increase from 24 teams to 36 (though the all-time teams have been ditched), as well as an update to the passing system: instead of showing your three receivers on giant windows at the top of the screen, they're simply marked on the main screen, meaning your view isn't blocked by said windows. A welcome upgrade in general. ■

FACT

The game's print ad campaign showed all the officially licensed team helmets with the message: 'Failure to identify all 36 of these helmets suggests that perhaps badminton is more your speed.' Which is harsh on badminton, to be fair.

BIMINI RUN

Year 1991
Publisher Nuvision Entertainment
Developer Microsmiths

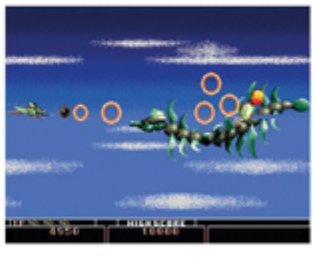
YOU ARE KENJI O'Hara, a self-made millionaire adventurer. When the evil Dr Orca kidnaps your sister Kim, it's up to you to jump in your armed speedboat, the *Banshee*, and take on Orca's army of boats and helicopters. The *Banshee* is armed with both low and high shots for taking out sea and air enemies respectively, as well as a bazooka for when the need arises. The game consists of six missions: after rescuing Kim at the end of the fourth you enter the strange Bimini Zone, where you're attacked by killer sharks, a giant octopus, sea monsters and massive mosquitoes as you try to find the mermaid who'll guide you to safety (because of course she will). ■

FACT

Bimin Run has a two-player co-op mode where one player controls the boat and the other controls the weapons. You can aim the weapons in this mode, rather than just firing them straight ahead in single-player.

BIO-HAZARD BATTLE

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega



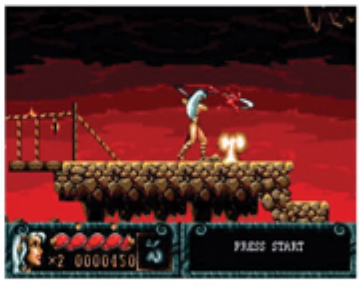
AN ENORMOUS GLOBAL biowar left the planet of Avaron practically uninhabitable and forced its remaining survivors to escape on a spaceship, where they've been frozen in cryogenic tanks for hundreds of years. It's now time for them to return to their home planet, but there's just one problem: the place is swarming with mutated beasts, and some of the old computer defence systems are still operational too. In this unique shoot 'em up you play as the captain of one of four 'bioships', which are part spaceship and part actual living creature, as you fly through eight stages gunning down everything in your sight. As you play you'll encounter coloured seeds, which your bioship can eat to gain new weaponry. ■

FACT

Although the Japanese language interchanges the letters 'L' and 'R' (which often leads to translation issues), the Japanese cover explicitly refers to 'Avalon'. This means the western localisation of Avaron is wrong.

BLADES OF VENGEANCE

Year 1993
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Beam Software



THIS ACTION PLATFORMER is set in an unnamed kingdom, which has been taken over by Mannax the Dark Lady. The mysterious Master has summoned the only three heroes who are able to defeat her, so off they set to take on the eight enemy-infested stages that await them. Each hero has their own strengths and weaknesses: the Huntress is your typical all-rounder, the Barbarian is extremely strong but slow with a poor jump and short range, and the Wizard can attack from a very long range but his attacks are weak. In a nice touch, if you don't have the courage to take the adventure alone, you can play with a pal in a simultaneous co-op mode. ■

FACT

The name Beam Software was taken from the names of its two founders. The BE was taken from Naomi Besen's surname, whereas the AM was Alfred Milgrom's initials.

BLASTER MASTER 2

Year 1993
Publisher Sunsoft
Developer Software Creations

ALTHOUGH THE ORIGINAL Blaster Master on the NES saw reasonable success in North America, in Japan sales had been poor and Sunsoft had decided to move on. The American arm of Sunsoft decided to take matters into its own hands, though, and commissioned Software Creations to make a new 16-bit sequel. Blaster Master 2 shares some similarities to its predecessor in that the platforming sections have you playing as a jumping tank and let you remove its driver Jason whenever you need to access smaller areas, but it also has differences: gone are the top-down exploring sections with Jason, replaced with top-down tank sections and zoomed-in side-scrolling boss fights. ■

FACT

Programmer Peter Andrew had never heard of the first Blaster Master when asked to make the sequel. 'I think we scoped the game incorrectly based on the time available,' he said in an interview with VGArc.

BLOCKBUSTER WORLD VIDEO GAME CHAMPIONSHIP II

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Acclaim

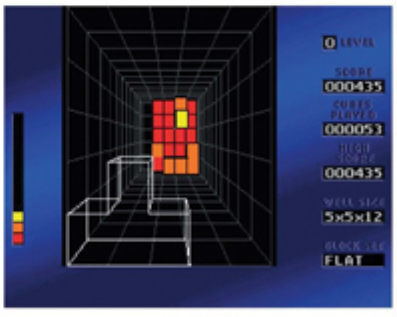
BLOCKBUSTER VIDEO HELD a pair of gaming tournaments in 1994 and 1995, designed to find the best gamer in the world (i.e. in the US). Players could choose to compete on either SNES or Genesis formats: those who opted for the latter competed in regional heats by playing a special cartridge with two games on it. First they had to play a single quarter of NBA Jam Tournament Edition and score as many points as they could. After this, they had to play five minutes of Judge Dredd, once again trying to rack up the highest score possible. The players with the highest scores would take part in the finals in San Francisco on 18–20 August 1995. ■

FACT

Although the SNES cartridges were later sold through Nintendo Power, the Mega Drive ones were ordered to be destroyed. Only a few remain, and have been known to sell for a couple of thousand dollars online.

BLOCKOUT

Year 1991
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer California Dreams



IF YOU THOUGHT Tetris was challenging, try adding a third dimension to the mix. That's the idea behind Blockout, which has you dropping blocks into a well to clear them, just like in Tetris, but makes things more complicated by giving the well depth as well as height and width. Viewed from above the well, the game gives you a series of shapes – each presented in a wireframe form so you can see through them – and you can use the A, B and C buttons to rotate each one around the X, Y or Z axis respectively. Rather than clearing lines as in Tetris, here you have to clear an entire layer to make it disappear. ■

FACT

There are three block sets available. These range from a 'Flat' set containing eight basic pieces, to an 'Extended' set which consists of 41 complicated shapes.

BLOODSHOT

Year 1994
Publisher Domark
Developer Domark

THIS VISUALLY IMPRESSIVE effort from Domark is a first-person shooter in the style of Doom, despite the Mega Drive's relative lack of power to generally handle such genres. Playing as an Earth trooper in the year 2049, you have to infiltrate a space carrier containing robot soldiers and destroy them all. In case there was any worry that things would get too much, you've been implanted with a chip called Battle Frenzy, which programs your brain to make you want to kill anything on sight. Distant enemies may just be a mess of pixels and the frame rate may tank heavily when there's action on the screen, but the fact that Bloodshot even exists is a technical marvel. ■

FACT

Bloodshot was renamed Battle Frenzy in Germany. This was also the name given the game on the Sega Channel download service (the only way it could be played in the US), so as to avoid confusion with a Valiant Comics series called Bloodshot.

B.O.B.

Year 1993
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Foley Hi-Tech Systems

DON'T YOU JUST hate it when you borrow your dad's car to go on a date but crash it on the way there and end up lost in the middle of nowhere? Also, when you happen to be in space, and also a robot? Hey, we've all been there, and that's the extremely common fate that's also befallen B.O.B., a robo-teen who now has to make his way through three separate worlds – Anciena, Goth and Ultraworld – in search of another car suitable enough for him to continue his journey and meet his missus. As well as his fists and guns, B.O.B. can also collect six items called 'remotes': these include a springboard, a propeller and an umbrella. ■

FACT

If you ever needed proof that sometimes Japan simply knows how to name its games better, B.O.B. is known as Super Funky B.O.B. there.

BODY COUNT

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Probe Software

NOT TO BE confused with Ice-T's heavy metal band, Body Count is a lightgun shooter that was only released in Europe and Brazil. As far as plots go, it's paper thin: aliens have invaded the Earth, so it's up to you to shoot them all, and that's about it. As with most arcade lightgun shooters at the time, Body Count moves on rails and has you following a set path as you empty your machine gun and grenades into everything that moves. Enemies take a lot of ammo to kill and their bullets are extremely fast, so playing with a controller can be hard: the game was designed with both the Menacer gun and the Mega Mouse in mind, and playing with either makes things far less difficult. ■

FACT

When you kill the enemies they explode into red blobs of gore, so despite the title the actual body count is likely to be zero.

BONANZA BROS

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

WHEN IT ORIGINALLY launched in Japan, Bonanza Bros was about a pair of thieves robbing a bunch of valuable treasures from a variety of different locations. This got Sega's western divisions a little nervous, so the plot was changed: not once, but twice. In Europe, you're playing as Mobo and Robo (their Japanese names), who are still thieves but have been hired by the chief of police to collect 'incriminating evidence' from corrupt businesses, or they'll end up in jail. In America, you're playing as Mike and Spike, a couple of private investigators who've been asked by a businessman to test the security of his properties by breaking into them. Whichever region's version you play, the general gameplay remains the same regardless: make your way through each of the environments – ranging from a bank vault to an art museum – and steal all the valuables while avoiding capture from the security guards patrolling the area. Some levels have specific gimmicks that add extra comedy to proceedings: the Mint level lets you flatten enemies with a big pressing machine, while the Laboratory features robots that let you stand next to them, remove their heads and wear them as a mask so you can pretend you're part of the scenery. Although Mobo and Robo did make a rare return as unlockable racers in Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing in 2010, it's fair to say the pair haven't enjoyed the global success a game this entertaining may have deserved. ■

FACT

The Art Museum stage is actually a Sega museum, and contains many exhibits based on cover and title screen art from games like Golden Axe, Columns, Fantasy Zone and Super Monaco GP.

BONKERS

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

WHILE SNES-OWNING FANS of Disney's now-forgotten animated series got an unexpectedly enjoyable Capcom platformer, the Mega Drive instead received a completely different game. The titular Bonkers D. Bobcat has just been declared Officer of the Month, and now has his choice of four different bad guys to head out and capture. Each mission offers a unique game style: Cream the Rat has you throwing bricks to create a wall around him, Mr Big's stage is a top-down affair where you break boxes, Ma Two Truck's level is a racing game where you have to bump off enemies, and to catch Harry the Handbag you have to take part in a shooting gallery where you throw donuts at bad guys. ■

FACT

Bonkers is about a former Disney cartoon star who becomes washed up and joins the police force. It was originally known as Toon Cop, and was inspired by *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*.

BOOGERMAN: A PICK AND FLICK ADVENTURE

Year 1994
Publisher Interplay
Developer Interplay

HIGH IN THE hills above the Takey Dump landfill, local mad scientist Professor Stinkbaum's laboratory can be found. The Prof has created a device that can open a portal, take the world's pollution and dump it in another dimension, but his plans are abruptly poo-pooed when a giant arm comes out of the portal and steals the machine's unique fuse. It's up to the janitor, who's actually eccentric millionaire Snotty Ragsdale and therefore superhero Boogerman in disguise, to enter the portal and save the day. Despite its clear emphasis on (literal) toilet humour, Boogerman is a relatively enjoyable platformer with some impressive character animations: you really feel it when he attacks enemies by picking his nose and flicking his snot at them. ■

FACT

A Sega 32X version of Boogerman was planned but eventually cancelled. Boogerman wasn't completely dead, though: he turned up for one last hoorah as an unlockable character in ClayFighter 63⅓.

BOXING LEGENDS OF THE RING

Year 1993
Publisher Electro Brain
Developer Sculptured Software

WHO WAS THE greatest middleweight boxer of all time? That's what Boxing Legends of The Ring tries to find out ('The Ring' being used in both the literal sense and referring to the iconic boxing magazine, who sponsored the game). There are eight legends in here – Marvin Hagler, Jake LaMotta, Sugar Ray Robinson, Rocky Graziano, Roberto Duran, Thomas Hearns, Sugar Ray Leonard and James Toney – and you can choose to either fight as them in exhibition matches or create your own original boxer and work your way through a career mode until you get to take them on yourself. While visually impressive, bouts can be quite lengthy: it takes hundreds of hits to take your opponent down. ■

FACT

The game was renamed Chavez II in Mexico and featured Julio César Chavez. This was the only Mexico-exclusive game ever released on a Sega console.

BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA

Year 1993
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Psygnosis / Traveller's Tales

THE SUCCESS OF Columbia Picture's modern take on Bram Stoker's iconic novel led to a whole slew of video game adaptations, with at least five completely different games making their way to various formats. The Mega Drive version is the same as the SNES one: playing as Jonathan Harker (played by Keanu Reeves in the movie, but certainly not here) you have to make your way through 16 stages, fighting seemingly the entire wildlife population, in an attempt to finally get to Transylvania, defeat Dracula (clad head to toe in red armour) and break the spell he has on your fiancée Mina. Despite it featuring great music and impressively large bosses, critics weren't impressed by the sluggish controls and respawning enemies. ■

FACT

The PC version of Bram Stoker's Dracula is the most unique of the bunch: it's a first-person adventure that looks similar to games like Wolfenstein 3D and Doom.

BRETT HULL HOCKEY '95

Year 1994
Publisher Sport Accolade
Developer Radical Entertainment

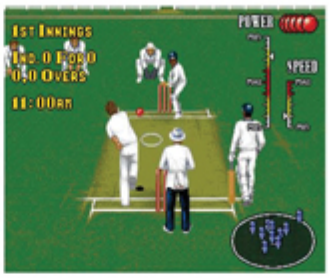
THE ORIGINAL BRETT Hull Hockey was planned for the Mega Drive but was ultimately scrapped. The same fate didn't befall its follow-up, though, which arrived all singing and dancing. Although it was also released on the SNES it looks completely different: while the version on Nintendo's console has a vertically scrolling rink, here the game is played with an isometric viewpoint (it's more FIFA than Madden, in other words). It includes the NHLPA licence, which means all the player names are real, but there's no NHL licence so the official team names and uniforms aren't present. Despite this, all 26 teams from that season are included (with their names based on the cities they come from) and there's limited play-by-play commentary by ABC's Al Michaels. ■

FACT

Al Michaels was employed by ABC for 30 years, but was traded to NBC in 2006 in exchange for Ryder Cup rights, Olympic highlights and the ownership of 1920s Disney cartoon *Oswald the Lucky Rabbit*. Yes, really.

BRIAN LARA CRICKET

Year 1994
Publisher Codemasters
Developer Audiogenic Software



IN 1993, AUDIOGENIC made Graham Gooch World Class Cricket for home computers. A year later Codemasters decided to rebrand the game with Trinidadian cricketer Brian Lara, and release it on the Mega Drive. There are 10 teams to choose from in the game: England, Australia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, West Indies, Zimbabwe, South Africa and an All-Time XI including the likes of Ian Botham and Mr Gooch himself. You can opt to play either a one-day game or a Test match, and can choose between fast, spin and swing bowling, with manual and automatic fielding. I should stress, however, that I'm Scottish and therefore have no idea what I'm writing here. ■

FACT

Brian Lara is considered one of the greatest batsmen ever. He became the first man to score seven centuries in eight first-class innings, and holds the world record for scoring the most runs in a single over, with 28.

BRIAN LARA CRICKET '96

Year 1996
Publisher Codemasters
Developer Audiogenic Software

WITH LOW SALES expected, Codemasters only made 20,000 copies of the first Brian Lara Cricket. They sold out in three days. Realising it was onto a winner in the UK at least, work began on the sequel. Brian Lara Cricket '96 doesn't play hugely differently from its predecessor, but it adds a couple of national teams (say hello to Holland, Kenya and the UAE), World Cup squads, international tests and historic matches to the mix. Perhaps most importantly, it includes county cricket too: there are 18 counties to choose from, all with real player names, meaning you can finally play out that bitter Yorkshire vs Lancashire derby I'm pretty sure has to probably be a thing. ■

FACT

This was also released in Australia and New Zealand, but because the Aussies love a good local hero it was renamed Shane Warne Cricket.

BRUTAL: PAWS OF FURY

Year 1994
Publisher GameTek
Developer Eurocom

WITH STREET FIGHTER II causing a swarm of one-on-one fighting games throughout the '90s, many studios looked for some sort of hook to set their effort apart from the others. Brutal: Paws of Fury had one such hook: all seven of its playable characters (and its two secret ones) are anthropomorphic animals. There's a lion rock star called Prince Leon, a kickboxing rat called Rhei, a coyote called Kendo who practices the art of 'tai cheetah', that sort of thing. While its general structure is similar to that of Street Fighter, with three punch buttons and three kick buttons, the single-player mode is unique in that you start with basic attacks and have to learn your special moves as you progress. ■

FACT

Interestingly, the password system is only used for logging the special moves you've unlocked. It doesn't save your single-player progress, meaning you have to start from the beginning each time (albeit with your new moves unlocked).

BUBBA 'N' STIX

Year 1994
Publisher Core Design / Tengen
Developer Core Design

WHEN A BUNCH of aliens decide they want a new attraction for their zoo, they choose to abduct a redneck called Bubba and his pet stick, Stix. Unluckily for them, Stix is sentient and can work with Bubba to get out of all manner of scrapes, so the pair start working together to escape. In this puzzle platformer you play as Bubba and can make use of Stix in a variety of different ways, from throwing him at enemies and hitting switches to prying boulders off ledges. The North American version of the game had a tie-in with Bubblicious bubble gum: the cover showed Stix with a pack of it in his mouth and it appeared numerous times in the game. ■

FACT

According to designer Simon Phipps, the original hero was going to be an Indiana Jones-style hero created in a more realistic style, with rotoscoped graphics based on footage of people performing actions, Prince of Persia style.

BUBBLE AND SQUEAK

Year 1994
Publisher Sunsoft
Developer Audiogenic Software

SQUEAK IS A cat alien from the planet Grool, which used to be a paradise until the evil Kat of Nine Tails took over. Searching for help, Squeak uses a Black Hole to travel to Earth and finds Bubble, a young lad he convinces to help him. Bubble and Squeak head back through the Black Hole to save Grool from its invaders. On his own, Bubble is your standard platformer character: he can jump and shoot at enemies and that's about it. Once he finds Squeak though, he can ask him to follow along and perform various tricks with him: he can kick Squeak at enemies, get Squeak to throw him high into the air and so on. You can also find special gumballs that give Squeak extra powers. ■

FACT

The game was originally due to be called Barney & Clyde until Peter Calver of Audiogenic had dinner with Sunsoft execs in London and ate Bubble & Squeak. The execs loved the name of the dish and trademarked it.

BUBSY IN CLAWS ENCOUNTERS OF THE FURRED KIND

Year 1993
Publisher Accolade
Developer Al Baker & Associates

IN A PARALLEL universe somewhere, Bubsy the Bobcat is just as popular as Mario and Sonic, and continues to enjoy great success to this day. In this world, though, Accolade's much-hyped mascot never quite reached the heights planned for him when it turned out that this debut platformer was entertaining but not without its flaws. Bubsy has to save his planet from the evil Woolies, a bunch of aliens who have seized all the yarn balls they can find: he does this by wisecracking his way through 16 levels, most of which have a hideously bad pun for a name (examples include Claws for Alarm, No Time to Paws and A Bridge Too Fur). ■

FACT

A 25-minute pilot episode for a Bubsy cartoon aired in 1993 and was sponsored by Taco Bell. Due to poor reviews, it wasn't picked up for a full show.

BUBSY II

Year 1994
Publisher Accolade
Developer Accolade

THE SLEEPY TOWN of Knee Bend is shaken to its core when dodgy entrepreneur Oinker P. Hamm decides to open up a theme park called the Amazatorium. It claims to show attendees the history of the world, but the problem is it isn't just simulating the past, it's actually stealing it from time and space and moving it to the Amazatorium. It's up to Bubsy and his two nephews Terri and Terry to find and defeat Oinker P. Hamm by making their way through each of the venue's themed worlds. The sequel introduces a co-op mode where one player controls Bubsy and the other controls a nephew as they zoom around throwing bananas at enemies (or at Bubsy, if you're in the mood for some anarchy). ■

FACT

Because product placement was clearly the order of the day at the time (see Bubba 'n' Stix), Bubsy can arm himself with a Nerf Ballzooka and fire Nerf balls at enemies.

BUCK ROGERS: COUNTDOWN TO DOOMSDAY

Year 1991
Publisher Strategic Simulations Inc
Developer Electronic Arts

THIS RPG BEGAN life as a PC and Amiga game before making the jump to the Mega Drive. Players have to put together a squad of six characters, each representing one of three races – Human, Desert Runner or Tinker – and four classes: Rocket Jock (i.e. pilot), Warrior, Rogue and Medic. This squad has to save Earth from RAM, an evil corporation that attacks your moon base at the start of the game. Battles are turn-based and as well as exploring a variety of planets you also get to engage in space combat. While RPGs this complex were fairly common on home computers they weren't on consoles: to remedy this, the game came with both an 84-page manual and a 56-page strategy guide explaining how to beat every mission. ■

FACT

If you're wondering whether Buck Rogers himself actually makes an appearance, he does: at one point you discover him as a prisoner and he helps your party escape from space pirates.

BUDOKAN: THE MARTIAL SPIRIT

Year 1990
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Electronic Arts

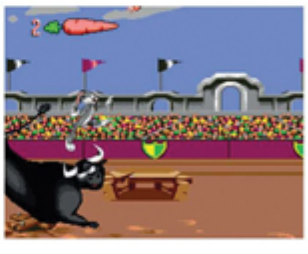
YOU'RE A 'BAD dude' from the poor side of town, and when you're pulled out of a street fight by an old man, you're initially not happy. But when the elderly chap gives you a kicking and explains that he wants to train you out of a debt to your father, you decide to join his dojo. Thus begins Budokan, a martial arts simulator where you learn four separate disciplines: karate, the kendo sword, the nunchaku and the bo staff. After training and sparring in each discipline you can board the train to the Budokan in Tokyo and fight to be the best in Japan. Budokan's extremely complicated controls make it difficult to get to grips with, but its attention to detail is at least admirable. ■

FACT

The manual shows the game's developers dressed in martial arts outfits and says: 'If only they had a Game Designing and Programming competition at Budokan.' Yes, if only.

BUGS BUNNY IN DOUBLE TROUBLE

Year 1996
Publisher Sega
Developer Probe Entertainment



DURING A DREAM in which he's being chased by Yosemite Sam, Bugs Bunny comes across the Televisor, a mysterious device he suddenly finds himself trapped inside. The Televisor can transport Bugs to other worlds: it's up to him to make his way through them all in order to wake up from his dream. Each of the game's eight levels is based on a different classic Bugs Bunny cartoon: for example, one stage is based on the famous *Duck Rabbit Duck*, and has the player trying to change the signs from 'Rabbit Season' to 'Duck Season' to make Elmer Fudd shoot Daffy Duck instead of Bugs. Other stages involve other enemies like Bully the bull, Yosemite Sam and Marvin the Martian. ■

FACT

The game had plenty of potential levels to choose from: between 1940 and 1964, Bugs Bunny starred in more than 160 Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies shorts.

BULLS VS BLAZERS AND THE NBA PLAYOFFS

Year 1993
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Electronic Arts

THIS WAS THE third game in the NBA Playoffs series of basketball games released by EA (the fourth if you count Team USA Basketball). As with its predecessors, the title refers to the two teams who competed in the NBA Championships the previous year: the 1992 season, in this case. Although it has a full NBA licence that allows for real team names, real logos, real uniform colours and entirely accurate player rosters, it's limited to the 16 teams who qualified for the NBA Playoffs in that season (sorry, Orlando Magic fans: your mob couldn't cut it). Some players have their own 'marquee shots' with animations unique to them: this includes Michael Jordan's 'Kiss the Rim' move and Karl Malone's 'In Your Face' jam. ■

FACT

The SNES version launched first, with EA's EASN branding. Sports network ESPN threatened EA with a lawsuit so it was revised with EA Sports branding in time for the Mega Drive version.

BULLS VS LAKERS AND THE NBA PLAYOFFS

Year 1991
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Electronic Arts

THE PREDECESSOR TO Bulls vs Blazers offered more or less the same sort of thing. The title this time is a reference to the now-legendary 1991 NBA Finals which was contested between the upstart Chicago Bulls and the veteran LA Lakers. As in Bulls vs Blazers, you can't choose from all 27 NBA teams – only the 16 who made it through to the playoffs – meaning anyone who wants a grudge match between the Lakers and the LA Clippers (a rivalry which, to be fair, is more meaningful these days now that the Clippers are a decent team) will be left wanting. This was the first game in the series to offer an instant replay mode and introduce TV broadcast style 'EASN' presentation. ■

FACT

The real-life 1991 NBA Finals were hotly anticipated because of the inevitable Michael Jordan vs Magic Johnson match-up. Ultimately, the Bulls romped the series 4-1

BURNING FORCE

Year 1990
Publisher Namco
Developer Namco

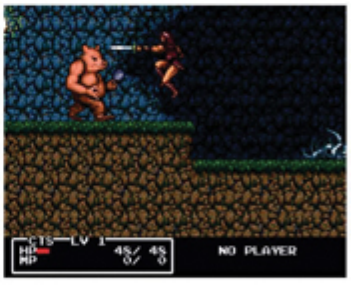
IT COULD BE argued that Burning Force was Namco's take on Sega's Space Harrier, given the similar perspective and 3D effects. You play as Hiromi, a student at Earth University who's trying to become a space pilot. In order to graduate, she has to head down to the Earth's surface and take on a series of tests, most of which involve shooting down waves of enemies. Although for the most part you're riding a waterbike which can only skim around on the surface of the water, for boss fights your bike is swapped out for a proper ship which can fly around in the style of Space Harrier. Beating each boss rewards you with a bonus stage where you fly around collecting orbs for a huge points bonus. ■

FACT

Hiromi appeared as one of the playable characters in Namco X Capcom, Monolith Soft's epic strategy crossover game on PS2.

CADASH

Year 1992
Publisher Taito
Developer Cyclone System



THIS INTERESTING PART RPG, part action platformer began life as a 1989 arcade game before being ported to the Mega Drive a few years later. Players are tasked with destroying an evil demon wizard called the Balrog and rescuing Princess Salassa, who he's holding prisoner in Castle Cadash. There are two characters to choose from, each fulfilling typical RPG tropes: the Fighter has high attack power, defence and agility but can't use magic and has to get close to enemies, whereas the Mage can fire spells from a distance but has low defence and agility. Although it plays like a standard action platformer in the vein of games like Rastan, you can still level up and increase your character's stats by defeating enemies. ■

FACT

The arcade and TurboGrafx-16 versions of Cadash included an extra two characters: the defensively-minded Priestess and the speedy Ninja.

CAESARS PALACE

Year 1993
Publisher Virgin Games
Developer Illusions Gaming Company

IT MAY HAVE been named Super Caesars Palace on the SNES, but this Mega Drive version is no less super than that of its rival: it's the same game. Well, almost. If you've ever dreamed of going to Vegas and making a fortune but never wanted the risk of losing all your real-life money – or the reward of actually winning any, to be fair – this is the game for you. There are seven different casino games for you to play here with your initial $2,000 of chips: Slots, Blackjack, Video Poker, Roulette, Craps, Keno and Video Horse Racing. For some reason, Red Dog is present in the SNES version but can't be found here: that must be where the Super went, I suppose. ■

FACT

The manual suggests that if you're on an unlucky streak you should try a different table, because a change of scenery might help. Unsurprisingly, this isn't scientifically proven.

CAL RIPKEN JR BASEBALL

Year 1992
Publisher Mindscape
Developer Acme Interactive

IN 1991, CAL Ripken Jr was the American League's MVP, a Silver Slugger award winner, a Gold Glove award winner and an MLB All-Star. It's little wonder, then, that Mindscape quickly snapped him up and put him on the cover of its baseball game, which simply had the working title of Mindscape Baseball. Ripken was the only licence Mindscape acquired, though: with no MLB or MLBPA licences, Ripken is the only real player in the entire game, and the 16 teams in there are fictional too. Players can take part in an exhibition game or a 20-game season, and there's a Home Run Derby mode where you're pitched a series of balls and are given points based on your singles, doubles, triples and homers. ■

FACT

Holding down Left + A + B just as the Mindscape logo goes away and the title screen loads will bring up the name of programmer Craig Ewert and the date and time of the final version of the software.

CALIBER .50

Year 1991
Publisher Mentrix Software
Developer Visco

THE TOKYO-BASED SETA Corporation released Caliber .50 in arcades in 1989, then it was ported to the Mega Drive by Visco. It's an on-foot shoot 'em up similar to games like Ikari Warriors in which you play as a US solider who's a POW in Vietnam and has to somehow escape the prison compound he's found himself in. Naturally, the best way to do this is via a steady stream of gunfire. The arcade version was a twin-stick shooter, but obviously this wasn't possible on the Mega Drive, so instead the B button fires while the A and C buttons rotate your aim. It works fairly well, especially because the number of enemies in the home version has been reduced to compensate. ■

FACT

If you beat the game you're asked to choose between the US Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps. You'll then be shown a set of dog tags with your name on them.

CALIFORNIA GAMES

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Novotrade

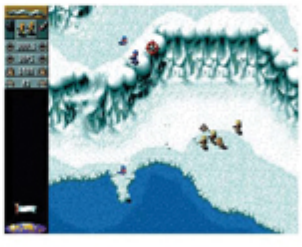
EASILY ONE OF the most iconic multi-discipline sports games of the 8-bit and 16-bit era, California Games was released on practically every home console and computer at the time. This Mega Drive version is one of the best-looking ports, but that doesn't mean it was without its issues. There are five different events to take part in here – half-pipe skateboarding, roller skating, surfing, BMX and foot bag – and you can take on each individually or in a series. What it doesn't have, however, is the flying disc event or the ability to choose from a selection of real-life sponsors, which puts it in the interesting position of being inferior to the Sega Master System version (which included both). ■

FACT

The US Genesis version has some horrendous surfer chat on the back of the box: 'It's most meritorious! So pull on those knee-pads and get gnarly!'

CANNON FODDER

Year 1995
Publisher Virgin Games
Developer Sensible Software / PanelComp



THIS CONTROVERSIAL WAR game only made it to Europe, but it's probably one of the better non-US games available on the Mega Drive. Taking control of a small army of soldiers, you have to take on a series of 24 missions with seven potential objectives: kill all enemies, destroy all their buildings, destroy their factory, rescue hostages, kidnap the enemy leader, protect civilians or get civilians home. Its point-and-click style control system lets you easily traverse the five different environments (jungle, arctic, desert, moorlands and underground base) but be careful: if a soldier dies they're gone for good, their gravestone a constant reminder of your failure as a new, young and eager conscript walks past it on the way to replace them. ■

FACT

The manual keeps it real: 'Don't try this at home, kids, because real war is not a game. Real war […] is a senseless waste of human resources and lives. We hope that you never have to find out the hard way.'

CAPTAIN AMERICA AND THE AVENGERS

Year 1992
Publisher Data East / Sega
Developer Data East

WHILE THE SNES version of Data East's Captain America arcade game was developed by Realtime Associates and published by Mindscape, for the Mega Drive version Data East decided to take on development duties itself. The result is a game that most believe is superior on Sega's console. Playing as either Captain America, Iron Man, Hawkeye or Vision (each with their own special moves), you have to fight your way through five stages as you attempt to reach Red Skull and stop him using a mind-controlling device to take over the world. There's a two-player mode, so if you've got a friend over you can 'assemble' and take on Red Skull and his supervillain chums (including the likes of Juggernaut and Ultron) together. ■

FACT

Although there are only four Avengers to choose from, along the way you'll be able to get assistance from Quicksilver, Wonder Man, Namor the Sub-Mariner and Wasp.

CAPTAIN PLANET AND THE PLANETEERS

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer NovaLogic

THE EVIL ZARM has sent out four of his underlings – Dr Blight, Duke Nukem (not that one), Hoggish Greedly and Verminous Skumm – to build doomsday machines that will pollute the Earth. With Ma-Ti (the Planeteer with the power of Heart) held captive, it's up to the other four Planeteers to split up, destroy each machine and meet up at Hope Island to rescue Ma-Ti and combine their rings to summon Captain Planet. Naturally, then, there are five stages in this platformer: one for each Planeteer and a final level which is essentially an extended boss battle between Captain Planet and Zarm. Unlike the (completely different) NES Captain Planet game, this one didn't get a release in North America. ■

FACT

Captain Planet was originally going to be voiced by Tom Cruise. He recorded six episodes then backed out: these episodes were re-recorded by his replacement David Coburn.

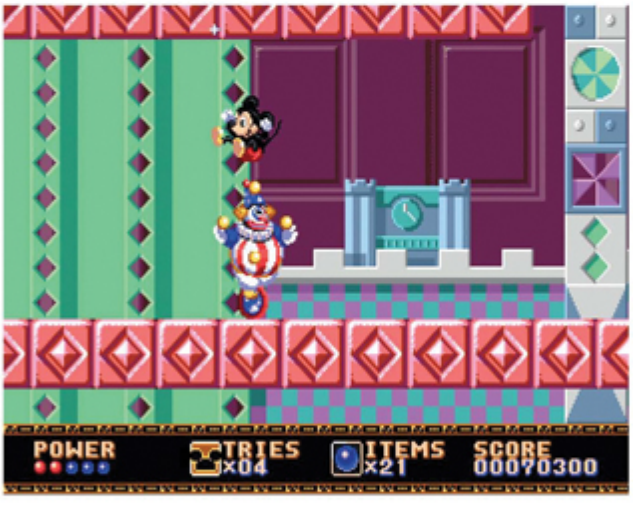
CASTLE OF ILLUSION STARRING MICKEY MOUSE

Year 1990
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

BEFORE SONIC THE Hedgehog appeared on the scene, a far more famous anthropomorphic animal held the platform game crown on the Mega Drive. Castle of Illusion was the first Disney game on a Sega console (the Master System version followed a year later), and quickly gained a reputation as one of the best early Mega Drive games. One day, as Mickey and Minnie are frolicking in a meadow in Vera City, the wicked witch Mizrabel swoops down from the sky and kidnaps Minnie, taking her to her castle (of illusion, naturally). Mizrabel wants to steal Minnie's beauty (even though she's literally vermin) and use it to make herself prettier, so Mickey has to make his way through the castle and collect the seven gems of the rainbow – which are needed to create a bridge that leads to

FACT

There are actually six Illusion games: this, Land of Illusion (Master System), World of Illusion (Mega Drive), Legend of Illusion (Game Gear), Epic Mickey: Power of Illusion (3DS) and a 2013 remake of Castle of Illusion.



Mizrabel's tower – and make sure the nasty old crone gets what's coming to her. Mickey's armed with two main types of attack: jumping on enemies' heads and throwing items at them. The former is actually more entertaining than the sort of thing you'd typically see in a platformer: instead of simply jumping onto bad guys in the standard way he actually does a patented bum-bounce on them, landing bottom-first in a manner that's both effective and degrading. The huge success of Castle of Illusion heralded the beginning of a fruitful relationship between Sega and Disney, with a number of mouse and duck-themed games exclusive to the Mega Drive and Master System. ■

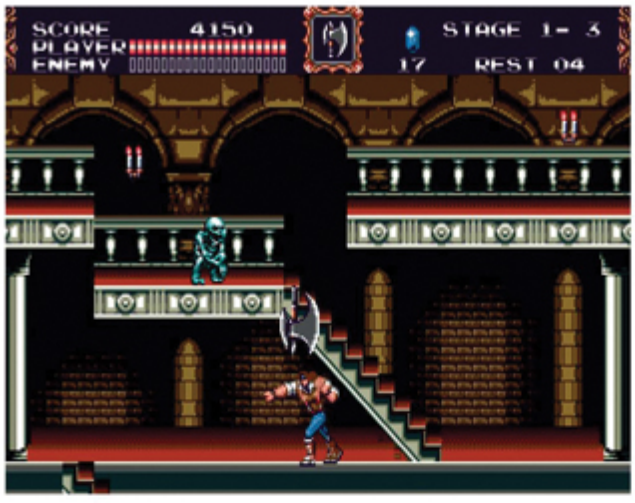
CASTLEVANIA: BLOODLINES

Year 1994
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

KONAMI'S LEGENDARY CASTLEVANIA series only appeared on the Mega Drive once, but what an appearance it was. In fact, Bloodlines is one of only two Castlevania games ever released on any Sega platform (the other being a Saturn port of Symphony of the Night), and the only one to be a Sega exclusive. It's set in 1917, a mere 226 years after the original game, and follows two characters – the whip-wielding John Morris, and Eric Lecarde, who prefers a spear – as they explore Dracula's castle and subsequently the rest of Europe in search of the resurrected Elizabeth Bartley (Dracula's niece) and her witch servant Drolta. Elizabeth and Drolta want to perform an unholy ceremony that will resurrect Dracula again, so John and Eric have to stop them. Obviously they don't manage it – that's what final bosses are for, after all – but it's a fun trek regardless.

FACT

Bloodlines was an attempt to tie the Castlevania series in with Bram Stoker's *Dracula* novel. John Morris is said to be the son of Quincey Morris, who's killed by Dracula in Stoker's book.



Bloodlines was the last Castlevania game to follow a linear route, before Symphony of the Night appeared and marked the beginning of the series' free-roaming nature that led to its part in the term 'Metroidvania'. There are six stages taking in Dracula's Castle, Greece, Italy, Germany, France and England, and gameplay is similar to that of the NES original, with simple 'point A to B' routes full of monsters. The European version, titled Castlevania: The New Generation, was heavily censored: all blood and gore was removed, as were hanging corpses, and a fountain of blood in one stage became a boring old water fountain. ■

CENTURION: DEFENDER OF ROME

Year 1991
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Bits of Magic

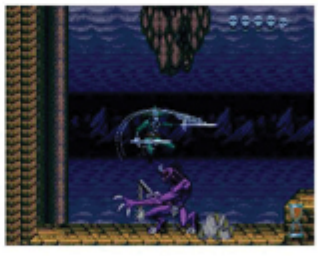
AS A CENTURION in charge of a single legion in the Roman army in the year 275 BC, your job is to defend Rome (hence the game's title). Centurions are allowed to have ambition too, though, and yours is to one day make it up the ranks and become Caesar. Centurion: Defender of Rome is a somewhat complex turn-based strategy game in which you try to build your army and engage in land battles (and later sea battles) against the likes of the Celts and the Parthians. Along the way you can take part in chariot races, and can attempt to sway things in your favour by bribing one of your opponents, hiring a physician or even invoking the help of the gods. ■

FACT

Despite the game's title you actually start out as a lower-ranking officer and don't become a centurion until you command a second legion. To become Caesar, you have to command 12 legions and three fleets.

CHAKAN: THE FOREVER MAN

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Extended Play



CHAKAN WAS A character who featured in a small independent comic series in the late '80s called Thunder Mace. When Sega's Ed Annunziata met Chakan's creator Robert Kraus at a comic convention, he was so impressed by the character that a deal was done to turn Chakan into a Mega Drive game. After he defeats Death in a sword fight, Chakan is doomed to live forever until he can defeat all the evil in the world. In what's essentially an assisted suicide game, then, you have to guide Chakan through 24 difficult stages, slashing through all manner of enemies, until both the terrestrial and elemental planes are clear of evil: at which point Chakan can finally turn his swords on himself. ■

FACT

Chakan ends with a seemingly endless animated image of an hourglass. However, if you watch it for 15 minutes, a message appears: 'Not the end.' It was, though.

CHAMPIONS WORLD CLASS SOCCER

Year 1994
Publisher Flying Edge
Developer Park Place Productions

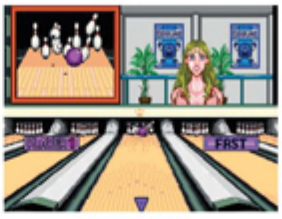
THIS CURIOUS FOOTBALL game is perhaps better known for what it gets wrong rather than what it gets right. There are 32 national teams to choose from, and players can take part in either a one-off exhibition game, or a tournament mode that splits teams into groups in a similar way to the World Cup. It's the teams themselves that warrant the most scrutiny, however: for starters, some of them are odd choices for a football game. Some teams that actually qualified for the 1994 World Cup, like Bulgaria, Norway and Nigeria, are nowhere to be found, but the likes of Israel, Canada and Peru did make the cut. Meanwhile, the Scottish and Australian flags are wrong and England is listed as Great Britain instead. ■

FACT

The UK, German and French versions featured endorsements on the cover by Ryan Giggs, Sepp Maier and Paris St Germain respectively, even though none of them were in the game.

CHAMPIONSHIP BOWLING

Year 1993
Publisher Mentrix Software
Developer Soft Machine



AS FAR AS bowling games go, Championship Bowling is fairly accomplished. There are three different modes available – normal bowling, spare mode (where you're given a series of random situations and have to score spares) and 'bonus' mode (where random pins are worth more points and each frame is worth 40). You can also choose how well-oiled the lane is, and take part in a tournament as one of four bowlers, each with different strengths. Mark 'the Marker' Thomas and Linda 'Striker' Tyler are both finesse bowlers who throw with great accuracy, Leroy 'Pin Action' Jackson' is a power bowler who favours raw strength over trying to place his bowls, and Dana 'Smarts' Kaplan is good at adjusting to different lane conditions. ■

FACT

If Championship Bowling feels like a slightly boring name for a game, you may wish to get your hands on the Japanese version, which goes by the slightly less serious name Boogie Woogie Bowling.

CHAMPIONSHIP POOL

Year 1993
Publisher Mindscape
Developer Bitmasters

SPONSORED BY THE Billiard Congress of America, Championship Pool offers a variety of different types of pool: three ball, eight ball, nine ball, ten ball, 14.1 continuous (straight pool), rotation, fifteen ball, basic pocket billiards, equal offence, cut throat and speed pool. If that little lot isn't enough to keep you busy there's also a freestyle mode – where you can just pot random balls to your heart's content – and a series of challenge modes where you compete in variations on each game designed for high score play. The main event, though, is the tournament mode, where you play against a sequence of progressively more difficult opponents as you try to become the Billiard Congress of America world champion. ■

FACT

If you weren't convinced by Championship Pool maybe its ad, as seen in various US gaming magazines, would tempt you. 'Chalk up, dude!', it states. 'It's the best rack in town!'

CHAMPIONSHIP PRO-AM

Year 1992
Publisher Tradewest
Developer Rare

IN THE LATE '80s Rare released R.C. Pro-Am, a fantastic NES racing game where the vehicle of choice was radio-controlled cars. Championship Pro-Am is essentially a 16-bit remake of this game, offering very little in terms of new content but ultimately not needing to, given the quality of the source material. As in the 8-bit version, the game is played from an isometric perspective and players have to finish in the top three to move onto the next race (there are six cars in each race, compared to four in the NES version). Each race also contains an upgrade for your car somewhere on the track, as well as an ample supply of rockets and bombs to attack your opponents. ■

FACT

One notable change is the collection of eight different letters, which replaces your car with a more powerful model. In the NES version these letters spelled out NINTENDO, but here it's CHAMPION.

THE CHAOS ENGINE

Year 1994
Publisher Spectrum Holobyte / Microprose
Developer Graftgold

WHEN ONE OF the evil Baron Fortesque's top scientists comes up with a machine that can transmute matter, the Baron imprisons the boffin and builds the engine himself. Unfortunately, this 'Chaos Engine' becomes too powerful and imprisons the Baron, turning him and much of the world's population into hideous monsters. It's up to an elite strike force – consisting of a mercenary, brigand, gentleman, navvy, thug and scientist – to destroy the Chaos Engine and save the world. With its steampunk aesthetic and action-packed gameplay, The Chaos Engine (otherwise known as Soldiers of Fortune in North America) is a memorable game that may have been more popular on home computers of the day, but nevertheless still enjoys a fanbase today. ■

FACT

The game is inspired by The Difference Engine, an alternative history book by William Gibson and Bruce Sterling that's considered one of the seminal steampunk genre books.

CHASE HQ II

Year 1992
Publisher Taito
Developer ITL

DESPITE ITS NAME, this is actually an enhanced port of Taito's classic 1988 arcade game Chase HQ. You play as a cop who's tasked with apprehending a series of criminals who are all trying to escape from various crime scenes in their cars. You have to catch up with them in your turbo-charged police vehicle then ram them continuously, damaging them until they're essentially just driving a big bundle of flames, at which point they'll pull over. While for the most part the game plays just like its arcade predecessor, the main difference here to justify the II at the end is the ability to choose between three different cars – a sports car, a 4x4 and a truck – each with their own speed and damage stats. ■

FACT

There were a few proper Chase HQ sequels in arcades. Special Criminal Investigation and Super Chase: Criminal Termination arrived in 1989 and 1992 respectively, before an actual Chase HQ 2 turned up in 2007.

CHEESE CAT-ASTROPHE STARRING SPEEDY GONZALES

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Cryo Interactive

THE RESIDENTS OF Speedy Gonzales's village have noticed that there's recently been a severe cheese shortage, ever since a large factory was built and started making and selling a cheese substitute. Speedy smells a rat (and it's not him, he's a mouse), and sure enough he discovers that the factory is being run by Sylvester, who's holding some of the villager mice ransom for good measure. Cue a fairly straightforward platform game where Speedy has to run through nine levels in order to reach the cheese factory and rescue his pals. The game was met with lukewarm reviews, with some critics bemoaning the fact that despite starring one of the speediest characters in cartoon history it was slower than the Sonic games. ■

FACT

When it got the rights to show Warner Bros cartoons in 1999, Cartoon Network decided to shelve *Speedy Gonzales* because of its ethnic stereotypes. After a petition from Hispanic-American fans claiming he was a cultural icon, the network changed its mind.

CHESTER CHEETAH: TOO COOL TO FOOL

Year 1993
Publisher Kaneko
Developer System Vision

IF YOU'RE NOT familiar with him, Chester Cheetah is the official mascot for Cheetos, the popular brand of cheese puff snacks available in many countries throughout the world. If you're expecting a heavily Cheeto-inspired adventure here, you may be surprised, because Too Cool to Fool actually has no references to the snack whatsoever. Chester has somehow found himself in an enclosure in Four Corners Zoo, and decides to escape by ordering a motorcycle from a mail order catalogue. When the zookeeper Mean Euguene finds out he breaks the bike into five pieces, so Chester has to make his way through each stage and collect them all so he can zoom off into the sunset (and definitely not eat any snacks while he does). ■

FACT

The manual is infamous for its atrocious spelling, grammar and turns of phrase. There are too many examples to cover, but let's just say it opens with the line: 'Yo! Welcome to the CHESTER CHEETAH®.'

CHESTER CHEETAH: WILD WILD QUEST

Year 1993
Publisher Kaneko
Developer Kaneko

SPOILERS: CHESTER CHEETAH did indeed manage to build his motorbike and break out of Four Corners Zoo at the end of the first game, but that wasn't the end of the story. As he took to the road and set out in search of Hip City USA, the evil zookeeper Mean Eugene caught up with him and tore his map into shreds (because apparently ripping things into pieces is what Mean Eugene does). It's time to travel across America, visiting a bunch of cities with terrible puns for names – the electricity-based stage is called Little Shock, Arkansas, for example – to collect all the map pieces. Cheetos actually do feature in this game: Chester eats them when he dies and starts a new life. ■

FACT

The first Cheetos product was Crunchy Cheetos, which was created in San Antonio in 1948. At the time of writing, there are now 21 varieties of Cheetos for sale in the US alone.

CHI-CHI'S PRO CHALLENGE GOLF

Year 1993
Publisher Virgin Games
Developer Coconuts Japan

ORIGINALLY KNOWN AS Top Pro Golf 2 in its native Japan, the brilliantly named studio Coconuts Japan teamed up with Virgin Games to bring its golf title to the west, complete with a shiny new sponsorship deal with legendary Puerto Rican golfer Chi-Chi Rodríguez. Despite the manual's claim that 'set upon islands of fantasy, golf courses beyond your wildest dreams beckon you to set foot on their fabulous fairways', the reality is two fairly modest USA and Japan courses, which can be played in either Stroke, Match or Handicap modes. There's also a Tournament mode, where you can take part in the Virgin Cup Tournament, which consists of 30 golfers (up to four of whom can be controlled by human players). ■

FACT

Chi-Chi Rodriguez was the first Puerto Rican to be inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame, having won eight PGA Tour events and 22 Senior PGA Tour events.

CHIKI CHIKI BOYS

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Visco

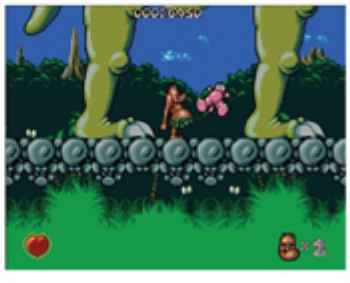
THIS HIDDEN GEM was originally released in arcades by Capcom in 1990 before being ported to the Mega Drive a couple of years later (as well as a bunch of other systems and home computers, sometimes under the name Mega Twins). The kingdom of Alurea is under attack by creatures from Monster Palace so it's up to a pair of unnamed twins – one wearing a blue mask, the other wearing red – to head out with their swords and save the day. This action platformer has lovely, chunky characters and some entertaining boss fights, as well as a wide selection of stages including some that have you swimming and flying (the latter involving a comedy winged hat that looks like a bird). ■

FACT

The blue twin has slightly more powerful sword attacks, while the red one has better magic attacks. The arcade version allowed for two-player co-op play but the Mega Drive port is solo only.

CHUCK ROCK

Year 1991
Publisher Virgin Games
Developer Core Design



YOU MAY THINK life as a caveman would be simple – especially when you're a caveman who also plays in a rock band – but for Chuck Rock that's far from the case. The unfortunately named Gary Gritter has abducted his wife Ophelia and taken her to his secret hideaway in a dinosaur graveyard, so off goes Chuck to rescue her. Given his neanderthal nature, Chuck's array of moves isn't the most sophisticated, but it gets the job done: he can use his bulbous belly to bash enemies out of the way, or deliver flying kicks to their heads. His main strength, though, is… well, his strength: Chuck can pick up large rocks over his head and use them as either weapons or protection. ■

FACT

Chuck Rock has one of the best level select cheats in history: using Right and Down on the D-Pad to represent the letters R and D, you use your controller buttons to spell out the word 'ABRACADABRA' on the title screen.

CHUCK ROCK II: SON OF CHUCK

Year 1993
Publisher Virgin Games / Core Design
Developer Core Design

THINGS CLEARLY WENT well with Chuck and Ophelia after the events of the first game, because before too long the couple have their first child, Chuck Junior. Chuck also gets a job at a car factory (carving cars out of stone, naturally) but his archrival Brick Jagger gets jealous of his ability and kidnaps him. Luckily, Chuck Junior is a chip off the old Rock, and despite still being in nappies he's clearly up to the task of rescuing his old man. Although Chuck Rock II plays similarly to its predecessor, Chuck Junior's not quite as strong as his dad so instead he's armed with a large club that can be used to hit enemies. He can also stand it up and balance on it to reach high items or avoid rolling boulders. ■

FACT

The Amiga version's credits give 'inspirational thanks' to a number of acid jazz bands like Jamiroquai, the Brand New Heavies and Ozric Tentacles. The game's octopus boss stage is called Ozric's Tentacles.

CLASSIC COLLECTION

Year 1996
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

MOST SEGA-PUBLISHED COMPILATIONS have a fairly logical theme or at least cover games from a similar era in the Mega Drive's life. Classic Collection is a little odd in that one of the four games included on the cartridge feels a little out of place. The other three are early-era Mega Drive games that are completely understandable inclusions: Altered Beast, Alex Kidd in the Enchanted Castle and Flicky. The fourth game, however, is Gunstar Heroes, which launched a number of years later and is significantly more advanced than the others. It's a welcome addition, to be sure, but given that it's streets ahead of the other three as a technical accomplishment, it makes the overall compilation feel a little lopsided as a result. ■

FACT

Alex Kidd appears in the bizarre Dreamcast RPG Segagaga. After being rejected in favour of Sonic the Hedgehog, he's found working in a retail store selling Sega games.

CLAYFIGHTER

Year 1994
Publisher Interplay
Developer Ringler Studios

THERE WERE COUNTLESS one-on-one fighting games in the 16-bit days thanks to the success of Street Fighter and Mortal Kombat, but few were quite as comical as ClayFighter. This funny fighter contains a roster of eight clay-based characters, from an opera singer called Helga to a pumpkin-headed ghost called Ickybod Clay. The plot is that they're all circus performers who've been infected by a meteor's goo and are fighting to be the king of the circus, but that seems fairly arbitrary (indeed, most people who owned it have completely forgotten that was the story). By the time it came to Mega Drive there was already a special Tournament Edition on the SNES with a 16-player tournament mode: this isn't present here. ■

FACT

In 2015 Interplay announced that it was working on a remastered version of ClayFighter, but it never happened. Interplay claimed it was going to sell off the ClayFighter IP but that doesn't appear to have happened (at the time of writing).

CLIFFHANGER

Year 1993
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Malibu Interactive

IN THE EARLY '90s Sylvester Stallone was still a huge box office draw, so it was inevitable that *Cliffhanger* would be accompanied by a video game adaptation on every conceivable format at the time. The Mega Drive version is a beat 'em up in the style of Streets of Rage in which Rocky Mountain rescue ace Gabe Walker (Stallone) has to make his way through treacherous terrain in search of his friends, who've been kidnapped by the megalomaniacal terrorist leader Eric Qualen. There are seven stages to fight through, and along the way you'll also find yourself climbing up cliff faces and rope-climbing over chasms, as well as taking on the occasional ridiculously over-the-top jump the movie was famous for. ■

FACT

If you have an interest in retro programming, head to Chris Shrigley's website. He's uploaded the source code for many of the games he worked on, including Cliffhanger, Ex-Mutants and Gargoyles.

CLUE

Year 1992
Publisher Parker Brothers
Developer Sculptured Software

IF YOU'VE EVER played the popular board game Clue (or Cluedo as it's known in the UK, where it was created) and thought 'I wish this was available as a video game', it turns out you've been living in the best timeline all this time. The 16-bit take on Clue lets 3–6 players (any combination of human or CPU-controlled) explore a mansion, collecting clues from other players in order to use the process of elimination to figure out who killed Mr Boddy, their weapon and where they committed the deed. Some elements work better than others: because each player has their own set of cards they keep secret, other players have to look away from the screen any time they want to check them. ■

FACT

The reason it's called Clue in North America is because Cluedo actually means 'clue-based Ludo', and since the game Ludo is so little-known in that region the name was changed.

COACH K COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Year 1995
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Hitmen Productions

YOU KNOW YOU'RE a legend in your sport when people can identify you by a single letter. That's certainly the reason Mike Krzyzewski is called Coach K: it's definitely nothing to do with people struggling to spell his real name. This is EA's only college basketball game on the Mega Drive and it's based on the same game engine as NBA Live 95, which had been released a few months prior. It features fully-licensed 32 college teams, and while their players can't be named (because NCAA athletes can't appear in licensed products) they have their real numbers at least. There are also eight all-time best teams included, so you can finally rest knowing who would win between the '79 Michigan State Spartans and the '67 UCL Bruins. ■

FACT

At the time of writing, Coach K has been the head men's basketball coach at Duke University for 40 years, winning the NCAA Championship five times. He also coached the 2008, 2012 and 2016 Olympic teams, who all won gold (because of course they did).

COLLEGE FOOTBALL USA 96

Year 1995
Publisher EA Sports
Developer High Score Entertainment

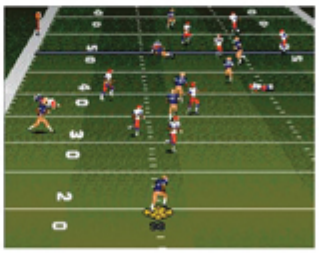
THE SEQUEL TO Bill Walsh College Football 95 may have lost the Bill Walsh name but gained so much more to make up for it. While its predecessor featured 36 officially licensed college football teams, this time all 108 Division I-A teams are available, complete with their real names, logos and uniform colours. Players can take part in a standard 12-week season, or put together a tournament instead (either straight elimination or round robin). There are also four official Bowl Games: the Fiesta Bowl, the FedEx Orange Bowl, the Nokia Sugar Bowl and the Rose Bowl. On the field, there are 400 plays to choose from (compared to 200 in Bill Walsh) and a new passing mode with five receivers on each play. ■

FACT

College Football USA 96 marked the only time the Southwest Conference and the University of Pacific Tigers appeared in a video game, because both ended in 1996.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL USA 97

Year 1996
Publisher EA Sports
Developer High Score Entertainment



THE SUCCESSOR TO College Football USA 96 introduced a number of new features, though the leap was far subtler than the previous year's. Most notably, as in the real-life 1996 season the number of teams rose from 108 to 111: the Pacific Tigers dropped out while Alabama-Birmingham, Boise State, Central Florida and Idaho joined the division. Other new features included the ability to create up to 28 players, new catching animations and the addition of both the USA Today & CNN Coaches Poll (where a panel of coaches rank the best teams each week) and the Sears National Championship Trophy. All the previous other features remain present, although the Fiesta Bowl's new sponsor makes it the even less-serious sounding Tostitos Fiesta Bowl. ■

FACT

The title screen gives the game's subtitle as The Road to New Orleans, referring to the 1997 Sugar Bowl. In a 'Sunshine Showdown' derby game, Florida beat Florida State 52–20.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Year 1994
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer BlueSky Software

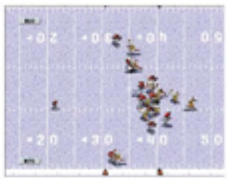
SEGA'S OWN TAKE on college football offered some interesting features, not least of which is the presence of play-by-play commentary. This is partly because the game is based on the same engine as NFL Football 94, which also had commentary. This was the first game to get the official collegiate licence, meaning it was rocking the official team names and logos shortly before EA managed to sort out the same deal. That doesn't mean it made the most of it, however, as there are only 32 teams to choose from (maybe storing more than 100 names in the commentary would have been too much). Options include Exhibition, Tournament, 'Race for #1' (season mode) and the Division Challenge, where you work your way through every team region by region. ■

FACT

The commentator in all of Sega's 'SportsTalk' games is Lon Simmons, who was known for commentating for San Francisco teams from the '50s until the late '80s.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP II

Year 1995
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer BlueSky Software



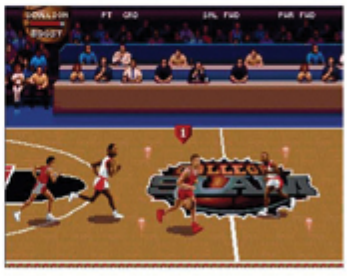
USUALLY WHEN A sports game gets a sequel it takes what's in the original and adds new features to it. It's very rare for a sequel to actually offer less than its predecessor, but that's what Sega's second college football game does. The number of teams is still 32, though five of them are making their debuts: Wisconsin, North Carolina, Colorado State, Oregon and Washington State. The wishbone offence has also been added, for those into that sort of thing. Crucially, though, the Lon Simmons commentary that made Sega's 'SportsTalk' games so unique has been completely removed, making for a game with a level of presentation that feels significantly lacking compared to that of the game that came before it. ■

FACT

If there are five new teams but the total team count hasn't changed, naturally that means five are out. Sorry, then, if you're a fan of Arkansas, Houston, LSU, Pittsburgh or San Diego State.

COLLEGE SLAM

Year 1996
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Iguana Entertainment



ACCLAIM WASN'T GOING to sit back and let EA and Sega enjoy all the college sports action, not when it had a perfectly good basketball game engine sitting there in the form of NBA Jam. College Slam, then, is essentially NBA Jam: Tournament Edition with all the NBA teams and players removed and replaced by 44 NCAA Division I basketball teams (not all of them, crucially: fans of colleges like Notre Dame and Tennessee were left wanting). Although college basketball licensing rules mean all of the players are generic, you can change their names and stats (though not their appearances). The game has a Season mode where you compete against 20 other teams in a qualifying ladder, then advance to a 16-team knockout tournament. ■

FACT

If you press Up, Down, Left, Right, Up, Down, Left, Right on the title screen you'll unlock nine hidden teams: seven fraternity teams, Daytona Beach and Palm Springs.

COLUMNS

Year 1990
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

IN 1989, HEWLETT Packard software engineer Jay Geertsen created Columns as a way to teach himself programming. After some colleagues ported it to the Mac and PC and it gained a little popularity, Sega approached Geertsen and bought the rights to it: it's been a Sega property ever since. It's clear why Sega was interested: Nintendo was enjoying huge success with Tetris. Columns is a little different: instead of clearing lines, you're dropping separate columns, each consisting of three coloured jewels. When you match up three jewels of the same colour in a horizontal, vertical or diagonal line, they disappear. It's a simple mechanic but one that cemented Columns as Sega's answer to Tetris, if not necessarily a more successful one. ■

FACT

The box claims that Columns was 'a game favoured by Middle Eastern merchants' in ancient Phoenicia, because apparently 'a game made by a programmer in Colorado' was less exotic.

COLUMNS III: REVENGE OF COLUMNS

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

WELL, IT'S ABOUT time those poor Columns got their revenge. The most notable difference about Columns III is that the main focus is on multiplayer: whereas the original game had an optional two-player mode, here competitive play is the main event. It supports up to five players (via the Sega Team Player multitap, also known in Europe as the 4-Player Adaptor) with a variety of different permutations, including a 'two against one' handicap mode where a pair of chums can have a fighting chance if their pal is an expert. Multiplayer battles are so pivotal in Columns III that strictly solo play is completely gone: even the single-player Pyramid Mode is a story mode where you take on a series of CPU opponents. ■

FACT

If you're wondering what happened to Columns II, it was an arcade-only release in 1990. It was ported to the Saturn in 1997, and came to the Switch's Sega Ages series in 2019.

COMBAT CARS

Year 1994
Publisher Accolade
Developer Accolade

SOMETIMES A GAME does exactly what it says on the box. In this case, Combat Cars offers just that: it's a racing game in which the competing vehicles are armed. The game is played from an overhead viewpoint and lets players choose between eight different characters, from the mulleted Ray to the slightly questionable 'five hundred pound junk food junkie' Big Bad Mama. There are 24 tracks in total, and the aim is to finish in the top three each time by making use of a variety of weapons, from glue spills and mines to heat-seeking missiles and shotgun blasts. Each win earns you some cash which can be spent in the shop, where you can upgrade your grip, your top speed and your acceleration, or stock up on ammo. ■

FACT

The two-player mode in Combat Cars is one of only a couple of games to use the Mega Drive's special interlaced graphics mode (the other notable example being Sonic 2's split-screen multiplayer).

COMIX ZONE

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega Technical Institute

FEW MEGA DRIVE games are as divisive as Comix Zone. This beat 'em up tells the story of Sketch Turner, a New York comic book artist who's struggling to find his first big break. One night, during a bad storm, Sketch is working on his latest comic, *Comix Zone*, when a bolt of lightning zaps through the window and hits the page. The story's main villain Mortus escapes through the comic and into the real world, and subsequently sends Sketch into the comic world. If Sketch dies, Mortus will gain a real body and be able to take over the world, so Mortus tries to speed up the process by drawing new enemies and hazards for Sketch to face. At its core, Comix Zone is a standard action game where you move from one area to the next beating up enemies. The twist here is that because it takes place inside a comic book, each of the rooms Sketch visits is represented by an individual panel on the page, and he gets around by moving from panel to panel (be that jumping over to a new one, kicking enemies through the margins or what have you). Meanwhile, every now and then Mortus's hand appears with a giant pen, drawing in new enemies or hazards to Sketch to deal with. While the game enjoyed great critical praise for its clever premise and unique art style, it drew criticism for its high level of difficulty and the length of time it takes to defeat each enemy. ■

FACT

In the US, the game came with a sampler CD featuring rock music from a variety of artists. In Europe, it instead came with an 18-minute CD soundtrack containing music from the game performed with real instruments and lyrics.

CONTRA: HARD CORPS

Year 1994
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

CASTLEVANIA ISN'T THE only Konami series to have enjoyed huge success on other systems but only ever appeared twice on Sega consoles. The same can be said about Contra – right down to the systems involved, the Mega Drive and Saturn – but whereas the Mega Drive Castlevania game is faithful to the series' roots, Contra: Hard Corps has its fair share of differences compared to the five Contra games that came before it. Set five years after the events of Contra III (that's the year 2641, for those not keeping count), the game follows the titular Contra Hard Corps as they try to save the city from terrorist leader Colonel Bahamut.

Instead of playing as a bog-standard soldier, this time Hard Corps gives you four different heroes to choose from: bog-standard male soldier Ray Poward, bog-standard female soldier Sheena Etranzi, a werewolf called Brad Fang and a hovering robot called Browny. The ability to select your hero isn't the only thing that makes Hard Corps stand out from its predecessors: there's also a branching storyline where the decisions you make in the story can lead to you taking on different stages and ultimately getting one of five different endings. That's assuming you make it to the end, of course: the Contra series is notorious for its difficulty as it is, and this is arguably the hardest of the lot. As with other early games in the series, Contra: Hard Corps was renamed Probotector in Europe and many of its characters were replaced with robots. ■

FACT

If you climb the wall in Stage 3 right before you enter the door to fight the computer hacker, you'll instead find a hidden arena where you fight a strange afro-haired boss who attacks you with a whip and boomerang fish while the Castlevania theme plays.

COOL SPOT

Year 1993
Publisher Virgin Games
Developer Virgin Games

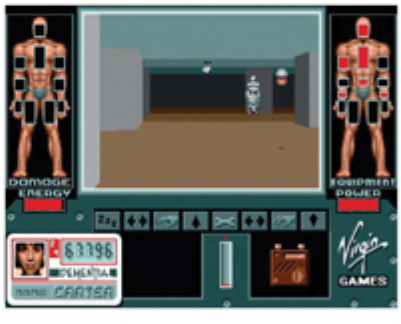
ONE OF THE oddest mascots of the 16-bit era, Cool Spot is actually the red dot on the logo of 7up drinks. In this platformer Spot has to rescue his fellow Spots by collecting a certain number of smaller red dots in each stage, which in turn will give him the power necessary to bust his pals' cages open and free them. The game doesn't jam 7up down your throat too much: Spot surfs on top of a bottle of 7up on the title screen and the bonus stages have you bouncing off bubbles and collecting letters to spell out the brand's slogan 'UNCOLA', but other than that it's fair to say the level of corporate sponsorship that's on display is far from overwhelming. ■

FACT

Europeans will have missed the 7up branding altogether: the bottle Spot rides on the title screen has a blank label and the bonus stage instead has you spelling out 'VIRGIN'.

CORPORATION

Year 1992
Publisher Virgin Games
Developer Core Design



KNOWN AS CYBER-COP in North America, Corporation began life in 1990 as a game designed for home computers like the Amiga, Atari ST and PC before it was brought to the Mega Drive. Players choose from one of six characters – two men, two women and two androids – and have to explore the headquarters of the Universal Cybernetics Corporation, who are suspected of creating mutants. Naturally, it's not long before copious mutant shooting ensues. The polygonal environments may appear crude today but this was a truly impressive looking game in the early '90s. While many cite Wolfenstein 3D as one of the earliest examples of the first-person shooter genre, it's important to note that Corporation originally launched two years before it. ■

FACT

Corporation's designer Kevin Bulmer was given an honorary degree by the University of Wolverhampton in 2009, for being 'a pioneer of 3D image technology and computer games development'.

COSMIC SPACEHEAD

Year 1993
Publisher Codemasters
Developer Supersonic Software

THIS IS A remake of Codemasters' 1992 NES title of the same name (known as Linus Spacehead's Cosmic Crusade in North America), with drastically improved graphics. In his previous adventure Linus crash-landed on Earth but, now that he's back on his native Linoleum (and his home in Old Lino Town), nobody believes his story. Linus decides to travel back to Earth with a camera to get photographic evidence. Cosmic Spacehead is mainly a point-and-click adventure game, where players choose between Look, Pick Up, Talk, Give and Use commands, but it also has side-scrolling platform sections when you're travelling between certain locations. If you're feeling lonely on your solo adventure there's also a bonus two-player mini-game called Pie Slap, which is fairly self-explanatory. ■

FACT

If you're the impatient type you could always just press A, B, C, A, B, C, B, C, A, Start on the title screen to jump straight to the ending.

CRACK DOWN

Year 1991
Publisher Sage's Creation / Sega
Developer HOT-B

THE EVIL MR K is a genius scientist who's gone mad (isn't that always the way) and has decided to make an army of AI robots so he can take over the world. Not if Special Forces Officers Ben and Andy have anything to do with it, that is. Crack Down is a top-down action game where players have to plant bombs on a series of red X marks on each stage. Once there's a bomb on every X they have to reach the exit before the time runs out, to blow the area sky high. Crack Down supports two-player co-op but the split screen is present even when you're playing solo. This, combined with the map on the top screen, means the actual game area is around a third of the screen. ■

FACT

The arcade version of Crack Down used Sega's System 24 arcade board, which supported high resolutions for the time (496x384), hence the split screen multiplayer.

CROSSFIRE

Year 1991
Publisher Kyugo
Developer A.I.

THE 'NARCOTICS TRIANGLE' of Colombia, Mongolia and Iran have started kidnapping various heads of state in an attempt to conquer the world, so 'Billy' decides to bring the entire drug empire down. Despite its silly plot CrossFire is an ambitious action game in which each stage is split into distinct parts. You start in a fairly standard shoot 'em up section before moving on to a zoomed in top-down section where you fly your helicopter over the ground, gunning down as many enemies as you can. After this, it's onto an on-foot section where you now have to make your way through the same area (obviously, the more enemies you killed previously, the easier it is), before rescuing hostages and escaping in another shoot 'em up section. ■

FACT

CrossFire was released in Japan as Super Airwolf, and was an official tie-in based on the US TV series. The licence was dropped for the North American version, for some reason.

CRÜE BALL

Year 1992
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer NuFX

WHEN YOU THINK of '80s heavy metal band Mötley Crüe, it's fair to say that pinball isn't the very first thing that springs to mind. That certainly didn't hold back Electronic Arts or NuFX, who decided to grace the Mega Drive with the presence of Crüe Ball. The pinball table presented here consists of three separate screens, and is actually fairly complex, with a bunch of moving creatures that can be hit for points, as well as an actual goal to reach: there are 10 different 'volume levels' you can progress through by completing various tasks (hitting certain targets and lanes, and so on). Naturally, the soundtrack features Mega Drive versions of three Mötley Crüe songs: Dr Feelgood, Live Wire and Home Sweet Home. ■

FACT

Crüe Ball was always going to be a heavy metal pinball game, but before it got the Mötley Crüe licence it was going to be called Twisted Flipper.

CRUSADER OF CENTY

Year 1994
Publisher Atlus / Sega
Developer Nextech

ALSO KNOWN AS Soleil in Europe, Crusader of Centy is an action RPG where you play as a 14-year-old boy called Corona (though you can change the name to something a bit less virus-sounding if you prefer). After inheriting his late father's sword for his birthday, Corona has to not only protect the people of Soleil Town from the monsters that surround it, but eventually travel through time to try to figure out why they have a beef with humans in the first place. Corona also has the power to talk to animals, who can befriend and join him to provide extra abilities. Cecil the squirrel, for example, lets you throw your sword further and bounce it off walls, while Flash the cheetah lets you run faster. ■

FACT

The North American and European versions translate the original Japanese dialogue in completely different ways. The European version is more accurate, but less cheery.

CRYSTAL'S PONY TALE

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Artech Studios

CRYSTAL IS THE prettiest pony in Ponyland, but also the shyest (which the game's manual declares is strange, as if only extroverts can be pretty). Because she's the indoorsy type, Crystal is the only pony who isn't affected when the evil Storm Witch fires a magic bolt at Ponyland, freezing all the other ponies and draining them of their colours. Crystal has to explore the farm, the dark forest and the Storm Witch's cave and rescue all her pals. In case it wasn't already clear, Crystal's Pony Tale is aimed at children, and has fairly simplistic controls: there's a jump button and an 'action' button which essentially performs all other tasks on a context-sensitive basis. You can change the colour of Crystal's body, tail and mane. ■

FACT

Crystal's Pony Tale was one of nine Mega Drive games released as part of the Sega Club collection, a series of specifically branded games aimed at children.

CUTTHROAT ISLAND

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Software Creations

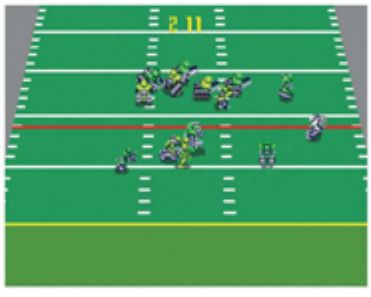
YOU'VE GOT TO feel for developers when a game they're working on is doomed to be dragged down for reasons beyond their control. In this case, the Cutthroat Island game suffered when the Geena Davis movie it was based on became the biggest flop in box office history, losing nearly $150 million in today's money and bankrupting its studio. The game itself lets you play as Davis's character Morgan Adams or William Shaw (played by Matthew Modine) as they buckle numerous swashes across 10 stages in search of the missing pieces of a treasure map. While the movie was deemed one of the greatest disasters in movie history, the game was merely dismissed as being too generic and offering too few new ideas. ■

FACT

The movie's studio Carolco was in so much debt while *Cutthroat Island* was filming that director Renny Harlin had to spend $1 million of his own money to have the script rewritten.

CYBERBALL

Year 1990
Publisher Sega / Tengen
Developer Sega



THE MEGA DRIVE certainly isn't lacking when it comes to American football games, but at least Cyberball – based on the 1988 Atari arcade game – offers something a little different, in that all of its athletes are actually robots. In some ways the rules are similar to the human equivalent: the aim is still to get to the end of a 100-yard field via the use of running and passing plays. However, there are plenty of changes too: there are only seven players on each team, there are six 3-minute periods per game, and there's the small matter of the ball, which will heat up and explode after five plays if it doesn't pass over one of the defuse lines (the halfway line or one of the goal lines). ■

FACT

The Japanese version of Cyberball is one of a handful of games to support the Mega Modem, which allowed for online multiplayer gaming. If you put a western copy of the game into a Japanese Mega Drive, the 'Modem' menu option still appears.

CYBORG JUSTICE

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Novotrade

WHEN A GALACTIC Unity Agent's ship gets caught in a meteor storm and crash-lands on a nearby planet, the evil Cydrek Federation takes their mangled body and turns them into a slave cyborg. There's just one problem: Cydrek's memory wipe didn't work, so this cyborg still has a memory and it's looking for justice. Hence the name. Cyborg Justice is a beat 'em up with an interesting gimmick: you can pull the arms and legs off enemy robots and replace your existing ones with them. There are six different types of arms, each giving different weapons – a circular saw, a missile launcher and so on – as well as six types of legs, which also have their own abilities, such as tank tracks that let you ram enemies, for example. ■

FACT

There are also six body types but these can't be replaced so choose wisely. These include the Lobster (with spiked shoulders) and the Quasimodo (which looks muscular).

DAFFY DUCK IN HOLLYWOOD

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Psyonic Systems

WHEN YOSEMITE SAM enters his office one day (because apparently he has an office), he discovers that all of his precious Golden Movie Awards have been stolen, and in their place is a ransom note for a million dollars signed by Mad Professor Duckbrain. Daffy Duck offers to help retrieve them, so, armed with his trusty bubble gun (because apparently he has a bubble gun), he sets off on his adventure. This is a straightforward platform game with two different endings, depending on whether you manage to find all the awards. If you do, Sam gives you piles of money as a reward, but if you don't, he'll tell you to go back and get them all this time. That's gratitude for you. ■

FACT

This is not to be confused with the 1938 Merrie Melodies cartoon of the same name, where Daffy interrupts a film shoot and causes all manner of expected hijinks.

DARK CASTLE

Year 1991
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Three-Sixty Pacific

DARK CASTLE ORIGINALLY began life on the Mac in 1986 before getting a Mega Drive port five years later. You play as a prince (known as Duncan in other versions, but unnamed here) as you try to make your way through the Dark Castle to reach and defeat the Black Knight. There are 14 rooms to make your way through, split into four categories named Trouble, Fireball, Shield and Black Knight. Duncan is armed with rocks (and occasionally fireballs) but the method for throwing them is a little odd: you move the D-Pad up and down to adjust the angle of his arm (almost like a tank's cannon), then press C to throw in that direction. Fans of the Mac version believe the Mega Drive one feels inferior to play. ■

FACT

If you played the original Mac version of Dark Castle on 25 December, the Great Hall would have Christmas decorations hanging from the walls.

DASHIN' DESPERADOES

Year 1993
Publisher Data East
Developer Data East

THERE ARE PLENTY of games about reaching a damsel in distress, but this time the 'damsel' is the one with all the power. Jenny's dad has bought her a trip around the world for her birthday and she's looking for a bodyguard to accompany her. Will and Rick are a pair of rival cowboys who are both desperate for Jenny's attention, so the two follow her around the world, constantly fighting to be the first to reach her. This is a split-screen platformer where Will (Player 1) and Rick (CPU / Player 2) have to race each other to make it to the end of the stage first. As well as dodging the various environmental hazards, the lads can also throw bombs at each other. ■

FACT

If you play the game on a Japanese Mega Drive, the title screen changes to Rumble Kids. The game was never released in Japan, but this suggests it was at least planned.

DAVID CRANE'S AMAZING TENNIS

Year 1993
Publisher Absolute Entertainment
Developer FarSight Technologies

CONSIDERING SO MANY sports games of the era were named after athletes, David Crane's Amazing Tennis must have confused a number of tennis fans who had never heard of him, not realising he was actually the game's programmer. Amazing Tennis focuses on men's tennis – though none of the players here are real people – and offers the three types of court typical of tennis games of the era: grass, clay and hard. You can either play an exhibition match or take part in a 16-man tournament, which is also fairly straightforward. Where this game stands out, then, is in its unusually low viewpoint, which makes for a visually impressive game but can make it hard to judge depth at the back of the court. ■

FACT

The game's umpire is voiced by real-life tennis umpire Frank Hammond. Regarded as the world's first pro tennis umpire, he once controversially disqualified Ilie Nastase during a US Open match against John McEnroe.

DAVID ROBINSON'S SUPREME COURT

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Acme Interactive

IT'S ALREADY CLEAR elsewhere in this book that games sponsored by pro athletes tend not to have full league licences, but basketball title David Robinson's Supreme Court is one of the more underwhelming examples of this, at least in terms of content. There are a grand total of four teams to choose from here – Chicago, Detroit, LA and New York – and players choose from a general pool of 20 fictional players with names like 'Downtown' Tate, 'Bullseye' Bond, 'Hollywood' Howie and 'Slow' Moses. David Robinson isn't even one of the playable characters, but if you complete the game's RPG mode (a four-team tournament where you control a single player) and are awarded MVP you get to play against an all-star team with Robinson in it. ■

FACT

David Robinson played for the San Antonio Spurs his entire 14-year career (despite San Antonio not being one of the four teams here), winning the NBA Championship with them twice.

DAVIS CUP TENNIS

Year 1993
Publisher Tengen
Developer Loriciel

THIS TENNIS GAME boasts the official licence of the Davis Cup, the most famous international team event in men's tennis. Exhibition and tournament options for both singles and doubles matches are available, but naturally the main mode here is the Davis Cup itself, which has you choosing a country and then taking part in a series of singles and doubles matches (the latter available as two-player co-op should you so desire). There's also a championship mode, which is essentially the game's career mode where you travel around the world taking part in various tournaments in an attempt to win as much prize money as you can. There are 16 countries in the game, with two (fictional) players representing each one. ■

FACT

A sequel for Davis Cup Tennis was planned but it was cancelled. A very early prototype version was discovered that had no sound and was still using the first game's assets.

DAZE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Year 1994
Publisher Sunsoft
Developer Funcom

THE ONLY MEGA Drive game to be released exclusively in Australia – not even Australian Rugby League can claim that – Daze Before Christmas has you playing as jolly old Santa himself as he tries to recover the children's presents after they were stolen by the evil Louse the Mouse. This entertaining platformer consists of 24 stages and involves collecting presents while throwing magic dust at the possessed toys that are trying to attack them (thereby turning them into presents too). Bizarrely, when you collect a hot cup of tea you turn into Anti-Claus, who swings his bag at enemies instead, smashing them into pieces. I suppose everyone has their own way of de-stressing. ■

FACT

If you enter B, A, Right, Right, A on the title screen you'll get 20 lives. Barra is a Swedish word that describes conifers (such as Christmas trees) shedding their needles.

DEADLY MOVES

Year 1992
Publisher Kaneko
Developer System Vision

DEADLY MOVES IS a one-on-one fighting game with a bit of a twist. While the actual combat is very much in the Street Fighter II vein like so many other fighters of the same era, the single-player mode actually focuses on building your character's stats. You play as an American fighter called Joe who wants to become the greatest fighter in the world by taking on seven other fighters – from Spanish matador Nick to Japanese kabuki performer Buoh – in an attempt to eventually reach the final boss, Ranker. Each time you beat an opponent on the way to meet Ranker your speed, jump, attack, defence or health stats increase, meaning by the time you get to Ranker you'll be a lot more powerful than you initially were. ■

FACT

Bizarrely, the magazine ad for Deadly Moves has hand-drawn screenshots that look terrible and nothing like the actual game.

THE DEATH AND RETURN OF SUPERMAN

Year 1995
Publisher Sunsoft / Acclaim
Developer Blizzard Entertainment

THIS BEAT 'EM up is based on *The Death of Superman* – by far the most hyped comic event of its time – and his subsequent return (in case the title wasn't clear). The first few stages have you playing as Supes himself until he dies a couple of levels in protecting Metropolis from the evil Doomsday. At this point, as in the comics, four imposter Supermen arrive, each claiming to be the real deal: the Cyborg, the Eradicator, the Man of Steel and Superboy. You get to play as each of them (they all play pretty similarly) over the course of the game's 10 stages but don't worry, the main man himself returns before too long to save the day once and for all. ■

FACT

The European version of the game has a bug that can cause the game to potentially freeze randomly during the first two levels. Rather than fix it, Acclaim stopped production, making it much rarer than the North American version.

DEATH DUEL

Year 1992
Publisher RazorSoft
Developer Punk Development

DEATH DUEL IS an interesting mix between a one-on-one fighting game and a lightgun shooter (although it doesn't support the Menacer). As Barrett Jade, the representative for the Federation, you have to defeat the champions of nine different alien races who are blocking off its trade routes. You do this by jumping in your giant mech and taking part in a series of duels (to the death, naturally) where you face your opponent from a first-person perspective and have to use your three weapons to wear them down. Your foe can hide behind walls to avoid damage, but luckily you can blow these walls up. Both competitors can also regain health over time, but if you destroy one of their body parts they lose a chunk of health permanently. ■

FACT

The rather questionable ending shows you a pretty woman who tells you that 'the council has promised me to the champion', before suggesting you rest up before Death Duel II. Which never happened, of course.

DECAP ATTACK

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Vic Tokai

THE EVIL MAX D. Cap has put together a personal army of mutants and split the game's island into seven separate parts, so it's up to Chuck D. Head – the latest creation from Dr Frank N. Stein – to help join it back together. The problem is that Dr Stein isn't exactly a master at his work, so Chuck looks a little irregular. Specifically, he has two heads: one in his chest and another detachable one. Chuck can attack enemies with each of these heads: his chest-mounted one can extend out and strike the bad guys, while the detachable one can be launched across the screen, hitting everything in its path before returning to you. A fun platformer, if a bizarre one. ■

FACT

This is actually the fourth in the series of similar games from Vic Tokai: the others were Kid Kool on the NES, Psycho Fox on the Master System and the Japan-only Mega Drive game Magical Hat's Turbo Flight! Adventure.

DEMOLITION MAN

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Alexandria

THE GAME ADAPTATION of *Demolition Man* may have arrived a couple of years later than the 1993 Sylvester Stallone and Wesley Snipes action movie, but it was arguably worth the wait because it's something of a hidden gem. Playing as Stallone's character John Spartan, the game starts in near-future LA (1996) as he pursues his rival Simon Phoenix (Snipes). The pair are then cryogenically frozen and the rest of the game takes place in San Angeles in 2032, where the chase continues. While the majority of Demolition Man's 10 stages are side-scrolling action platformer fare, two of them are top-down shooting levels where an intuitive control system lets you fire straight ahead, directly behind you or locked in a specific direction. ■

FACT

The script wasn't going to have a 1996 prologue until screenwriter Fred Dekker (The Monster Squad) had a look and suggested it should show Stallone and Snipes in their own time, because 'if you don't show Kansas, Oz isn't all that special'.

DESERT DEMOLITION STARRING ROAD RUNNER AND WILE E COYOTE

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer BlueSky Software

AS FUN AS it is watching the Road Runner get the better of Wile E Coyote in many a Looney Tunes cartoon, some of us always wished Wile E would catch him one day. Desert Demolition is a platformer that caters to both sides of the divide, allowing you play as either character. If you play as Road Runner, your job is to avoid Wile E's countless attacks while stopping to eat bird seed every now and then to restore your health. Playing as Wile E, on the other hand, obviously involves trying to catch the Road Runner, which you can do with the help of various Acme gadgets such as rocket skates, springs and a bat outfit. You can't actually kill the Road Runner, mind you. ■

FACT

Every *Road Runner* cartoon started with the Road Runner and Wile E Coyote being given a different set of fake Latin names. In this game's intro they're Speedicus Birdicus and Canis Ravenous respectively.

DESERT STRIKE: RETURN TO THE GULF

Year 1992
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Electronic Arts

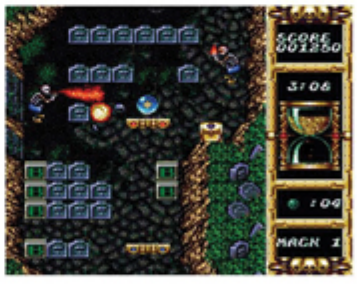
THE FIRST GAME in a legendary five-game series, Desert Strike was inspired by the events of the Gulf War in the early '90s. Accompanied by one of a choice of co-pilots (each with different levels of gun and winch skill), your one-helicopter army has to take on five campaigns (levels), each with a number of smaller missions, in order to take down the evil dictator General Kilbaba, whose similarity to Saddam Hussein is purely coincidental. Controlling your helicopter takes getting used to because momentum is a factor, and you have to keep tabs on your ammo, armour and fuel as you play. When it all clicks, though, swinging your chopper around and spraying bullets everywhere is extremely satisfying. ■

FACT

There were five Strike games in total. Desert Strike, Jungle Strike and Urban Strike all launched on the Mega Drive (and can be found in this book), while Soviet Strike and Nuclear Strike came to polygonal consoles.

DEVILISH: THE NEXT POSSESSION

Year 1992
Publisher Sage's Creation
Developer Aisystem Tokyo



THE ORIGINAL DEVILISH launched on Sega's Game Gear in early 1991. This Mega Drive sequel offers more of the same, particularly its interesting Breakout-based mechanics. It plays a little like a scrolling shoot 'em up, but the gimmick is that instead of a ship you're armed with two large stone paddles and a magical sphere. As you destroy the blocks and enemies above you with the sphere, you continue to travel through the stage until you reach a boss, which must be – you guessed it – whacked with the sphere a bunch of times. Stages can scroll either vertically or horizontally, and you can rotate your top paddle to form an L shape to help you take on the horizontal ones. ■

FACT

A third and final Devilish game was released on the Nintendo DS in 2005, but was criticised for its short length.

DICK TRACY

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega Technical Institute

THIS ACTION PLATFORMER puts you in the yellow trenchcoat of everyone's favourite '30s comic book detective who isn't Batman. A bunch of criminals led by crimelord Big Boy Caprice have infiltrated the city streets, so Dick sets out to take them down one at a time. You're armed with both a pistol and a machine gun: the former is used to shoot enemies who appear to either side of you, while the latter is used to take out enemies who appear in the background. You can also do a lot of damage to the scenery with the machine gun, which is a nice touch. The game features the likenesses of many actors from the movie, like Warren Beatty as Dick Tracy and Al Pacino as Big Boy. ■

FACT

Although Big Boy is a large, overweight guy in the comics, Pacino's version in the movie is of average height and weight. Instead, his name refers to his large hands, nose and cheekbones.

DICK VITALE'S 'AWESOME, BABY!' COLLEGE HOOPS

Year 1994
Publisher Time Warner Interactive
Developer Time Warner Interactive

WITH NO OFFICIAL collegiate licence to speak of, Time Warner Interactive decided that the next best thing would be to sign up Dick Vitale, best known for his college basketball commentary on ESPN. Naturally, Dick provides commentary duties here too, though obviously it's limited to soundbites like the titular 'awesome, baby'. A talking Dick isn't the only notable feature here, however: Time Warner was brave enough to set the game on a 3D scaling and rotating court, with the camera sat over the shoulder of whoever has the ball. This makes for a game that's visually unlike any other on the Mega Drive, even if the number of frames per second is regularly in the single figures as a result. ■

FACT

If you think 'awesome, baby' is a weird name for a title, think yourself lucky Time Warner didn't use one of Vitale's other catchprases instead: he refers to top freshman players as 'diaper dandies'.

DINO DINI'S SOCCER

Year 1994
Publisher Virgin Interactive
Developer Dini & Dini Productions

THIS IS A port of Goal!, an Amiga football game developed by noted football game designer Dino Dini. Whereas Dini was unhappy with the SNES version of the game and tried to disassociate himself from it, the Mega Drive version was handled directly by him, with his wife Pam as producer. It includes 99 international football teams, from the expected giants such as Brazil, Italy and Scotland (don't laugh) to such unexpected inclusions as Fiji, Guyana and the Antilles. Players can take part in standard friendlies, a league format or a World Cup style tournament with groups followed by a knockout stage. Also notable are its multiple viewpoints: when the goalie gets the ball you see a zoomed out view, which returns to a closer one after the ball's kicked. ■

FACT

Somewhat cheekily, the game's title screen tagline is 'It's in the name': not only pointing out that Dini's name is reputable, but also a clear dig at EA Sports' 'It's in the game' slogan.

DINO LAND

Year 1991
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Wolf Team

THE TITLE AND cover may not make it immediately clear but Dino Land is actually a pinball game, one with a surprising degree of depth. Your ball is actually Dino-Bunz, a small dinosaur who can roll himself into a ball and damage other dinosaurs when he does. Dino Land consists of three separate multi-screen pinball tables: one based on the land, one set underwater and one located in the sky. The aim is to complete the right series of goals and eventually make your way through the tables to find and rescue Meeshell, his girlfriend. Despite its performance issues making it difficult to react to fast deflections at times, Dino Land is a pleasant pinball game that fans of the genre may wish to find. ■

FACT

The manual clearly loves its dinosaurs, to the extent that it even has a section discussing the three main theories as to why they became extinct (earthquake, falling meteorite, the Ice Age).

A DINOSAUR'S TALE

Year 1993
Publisher Hi-Tech Expressions
Developer Funcom

IT'S NOT QUITE clear why this game was called A Dinosaur's Tale and not instead given the same name as the movie it's based on, *We're Back! A Dinosaur's Story* (especially because the SNES game did indeed share the film's name). While SNES owners got a game that was completely different from the movie, the Mega Drive version followed its plot more closely. Players can take control of either Louie or Cecilia, the film's two child protagonists. They play identically, but the order of stages changes. As well as a series of platforming stages, the game also occasionally mixes things up with some genuinely impressive third-person pseudo 3D sections where you guide dinosaurs through New York's streets and Central Park. ■

FACT

Despite being pushed as the first big animated movie from Steven Spielberg's Amblimation animation studio, *We're Back!* only made $9 million in US cinemas (worth around $20 million today, adjusted for inflation).

DINOSAURS FOR HIRE

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega Interactive

ANOTHER GAME BASED on a dinosaur-themed licence, this time the indie Eternity Comics series *Dinosaurs for Hire* in which four aliens who look like dinosaurs crash-land on Earth and become freelance mercenaries. The game lets you choose between three of these characters – Archie the tyrannosaurus, Lorenzo the triceratops or Reese the stegosaurus – each of whom is armed with a different weapon (a machine gun, elephant gun and pulse cannon respectively). The gameplay itself is a run and gun action game, consisting of five main levels split into a number of shorter stages. As you progress through your adventure gunning down America's worst hoodlums you'll take in the likes of the Empire State Building, the Hoover Dam, Hollywood and a toy factory. ■

FACT

The original comic series ran for nine issues between 1988–90 before it was cancelled. When Malibu Comics purchased Eternity it published another 12 issues in 1993–94.

THE DISNEY COLLECTION

Year 1996
Publisher Disney Interactive
Developer Sega

NEAR THE END of the Mega Drive's life, Disney Interactive decided to release a two-in-one cartridge in Europe and Australia containing two of the earlier Disney exclusives released on the system. The Disney Collection contains both Castle of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse and Quackshot Starring Donald Duck on one cartridge (both of which were originally developed by Sega), and with names that long it's probably just as well that it was named The Disney Collection instead. Despite both games having originally launched half a decade earlier, it was undeniable that their quality continued to shine through, and anyone who hadn't played them yet was being treated to a way to experience them both while getting better value for money. ■

FACT

Disney Interactive was set up in mid 1995 to publish games. At the time of writing it still exists, though it stopped publishing in 2016 after its Disney Infinity game was discontinued.

DJ BOY

Year 1990
Publisher Kaneko / Sega
Developer Inter State

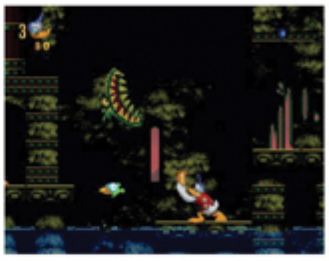
DJ BOY IS a beat 'em up that tells the story of Donald J Boy, a roller-fighter who decides to take part in a 'fight race' known as Rollergame while also trying to rescue his girlfriend Maria from the Dark Knights, a rival roller-fighter gang. It was notorious for its extremely high difficulty level: you only get one life with no continues, and some of the bosses can be fairly cheap (not to mention the fifth level where you have to fight all the bosses in a row). Some changes were also made to the western versions of the game to avoid some of the more uncomfortable elements of the Japanese version: most notably the Big Mama boss, a stereotypically designed Black woman who farts on you. ■

FACT

The original arcade version has a completely different plot in which two chaps called Bob and Tom are trying to get back their boombox after it was stolen by skater thieves.

DONALD IN MAUI MALLARD

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Eurocom



DESPITE GETTING A North American release on the SNES, the Mega Drive version of this Donald Duck platformer only made it to Europe and Brazil. Donald stars as Maui Mallard, a 'quack detective' who wears a Hawaiian shirt. While visiting a tropical island, he learns that its idol Shabuhm Shabuhm has been stolen and the islanders are willing to pay big money for its return, so he decides to try and track it down. There are nine stages to play through here, and Donald is armed with a special gun that fires different types of bugs, each with different powers (a lightning bug, a fireball bug, that sort of thing). He can also eventually transform into a ninja, arming him with a staff to help him navigate certain areas. ■

FACT

The manual reveals that Donald's favourite food is spicy chicken quesadillas, his hobbies are travel, reading and hunting, and his blood type is 'red'.

DOUBLE CLUTCH

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer ASCII Entertaiment

THIS TOP-DOWN RACING game may look like Micro Machines but it borrows more from games like Super Off-Road in terms of structure. Each race consists of seven cars, and as long as you can finish in the top three you'll qualify for the next one. After a race your position will affect how much prize money you're given: this can then be spent on upgrading your car's acceleration, handling, engine and boost. There's also a two-player competitive mode where both players share the same screen as in Micro Machines. Whereas that game stopped the race any time a player left the screen, however, in Double Clutch a player who leaves the screen is teleported back into the action and given a time penalty, affecting the final results. ■

FACT

You can choose between four different racers, each with suitably cheesy names: Todd Wheeler, Lance Quick, Pam Wilder and Joe Thunder.

DOUBLE DRAGON

Year 1992
Publisher Ballistic
Developer Software Creations

FIVE YEARS AFTER it hit arcades, Technos Japan's Double Dragon came to the Mega Drive courtesy of Accolade (under its Ballistic label). As in the coin-op version, players fight their way through countless members of the Black Warriors gang in order to reach the Shadow Boss, who's kidnapped Billy Lee's girlfriend Marion. The Mega Drive version is closer visually to the arcade one than most other home conversions that came before it, but the plot has been tweaked to match the NES version's. Because the NES game only supported single-player play, Jimmy Lee (the player two character) is instead the final boss. That's the case in the Mega Drive version too, but the fact it does actually have a two-player mode means player two instead controls 'Billy's friend', Jake. ■

FACT

In 2012 a parody sequel to Double Dragon called Abobo's Big Adventure was released by humour site I-Mockery. Players control boss character Abobo as he searches for his son Aboboy.

DOUBLE DRAGON 3: THE ARCADE GAME

Year 1992
Publisher Flying Edge
Developer Software Creations

DESPITE THE BOX referring to this Double Dragon threequel as The Arcade Game, it's actually called Double Dragon 3: The Rosetta Stone on the title screen (as well as many other versions of the game, including the arcade one). This refers to the game's plot, where a fortune teller reveals to Billy and Jimmy Lee that they need to travel the world and collect three Rosetta Stones before they fall into the hands of a new evil. Cue an epic brawl across America, China, Japan, Rome and finally Egypt. An interesting new addition is the ability to buy 'Extra Guys' from a shop: there are three other sets of fighting twins you can recruit, and when Billy or Jimmy dies one of the others will jump in to continue the fight. ■

FACT

The arcade version of Double Dragon 3 supported three players, with the third player controlling a yellow-clad fighter called Sonny. He's one of the 'Extra Guys' in the Mega Drive version.

DOUBLE DRAGON V: THE SHADOW FALLS

Year 1994
Publisher Tradewest
Developer Leland Interactive Media

DITCHING THE BEAT' em up format that served the series so well up until this point, Double Dragon V is instead a one-on-one fighting game in the Street Fighter mould. Based on the animated series that aired for 26 episodes in 1993–94, The Shadow Falls features 12 fighters, including two boss characters (a dominatrix called Dominique and the infamous Shadow Master) who can also be unlocked. It also has finishing moves called Overkills: these are similar to the fatalities in Mortal Kombat but with a twist: instead of each character having a specific finishing move, they instead have a specific death. This means you could play through with one character and see a variety of different deaths, one for each fighter you came up against. ■

FACT

There wasn't actually a Double Dragon IV when this launched. The assumption was that Super Double Dragon was the fourth game. The actual Double Dragon IV came in 2017.

DOUBLE DRIBBLE: THE PLAYOFF EDITION

Year 1994
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

THE ORIGINAL DOUBLE Dribble is widely regarded as one of the first truly iconic basketball games, with both the 1986 arcade version and the 1987 NES one loved by many. This sequel-of-sorts is remembered less fondly, but in fairness it isn't really a true Double Dribble game at all: in both its native Japan and Europe, it's called HyperDunk instead. As with many other Mega Drive basketball games there's no NBA licence, so the 16 teams on offer have no official logos (though at least Konami put the effort in to include fake roster names too instead of just making each player nameless). One thing it does boast that few other Mega Drive games do is an 8-player mode, made possible by linking two of Sega's Team Player multitaps together. ■

FACT

The box states that 'Double Dribble brings basketball to a higher level. Because to play is human. But to slam is divine.' Which seems a tad much.

DOUBLE HITS

Year 1996
Publisher Codemasters
Developer Codemasters

CODEMASTERS ENJOYED NOTABLE success during the Mega Drive era, especially in Europe (including its native United Kingdom). Double Hits was the publisher's attempt to provide value for players by bundling two of its older Mega Drives games onto a single cartridge. The titles in this instance are the much-loved racing game Micro Machines and the critically acclaimed Psycho Pinball. Whereas most multi-game compilation cartridges open with some sort of menu screen where players can choose which of the games they want to play, Double Hits instead simply boots one of the two games, and if it isn't the one you want you can switch to the other one by pressing the Reset button on the Mega Drive console itself. ■

FACT

The Micro Machines Museum website at m2museum.com boasts the world's largest collection of Micro Machines, with over 6,000 toys to browse through.

DOUBLE PACK

Year Various
Publisher Sega OziSoft
Developer Various

IN 1992 THE company OziSoft was formed. OziSoft specialised in manufacturing and distributing Sega hardware and software in Australia and New Zealand, and the latter included a bunch of dual-game releases called Double Pack. Rather than having multiple games on one cartridge, each Double Pack actually came in a larger VHS style box containing two separate cartridges. Some of the pairings in these Double Packs made sense: the Ecco the Dolphin / Ariel the Little Mermaid pack's joint aquatic theme was a no-brainer, as was the Micro Machines / F1 pack and the Hulk / Spider-Man one. Most of them, though, felt completely arbitrary, such as Robocop vs the Terminator being paired with Winter Olympics or The Jungle Book being included alongside Columns. ■

FACT

There were 17 Double Packs in total. Other odd pairings include Davis Cup World Tour and Gunstar Heroes, and Combat Cars and World Cup Italia 90.

DR ROBOTNIK'S MEAN BEAN MACHINE

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Compile

COMPILE'S PUZZLE GAME Puyo Puyo had been a huge success in Japan, with the Mega Drive version enjoying bestseller status for four months. When it came to releasing the game in North America and Europe, though, Compile and Sega decided to make changes in order to make Puyo Puyo appeal more to western gamers. Enter Dr Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine, which is Puyo Puyo with all its characters swapped out for enemies from the *Adventures of Sonic the Hedgehog* cartoon series (which had just started airing a couple of months earlier). The plot is rather sinister: Robotnik's henchbots have been rounding up the innocent beans of Beanville and grouping them together in dungeons: when four of the same type are grouped together they're sent to the 'Mean Bean Machine', where they're turned into robot slaves. It's up to the player to save the day by taking on each of the henchbots and grouping together their own sets of beans to help rescue them and bring down Robotnik's evil scheme. In the typical Puyo Puyo style, the game is played by dropping pairs of coloured beans. If four of the same colour touch they disappear, so the aim is to try to set up combos so that clearing one set of beans will in turn cause another set to disappear. Chain reactions like this will send clear 'refugee' beans to your opponent's screen: these are harder to clear and make it more likely that your opponent's beans will reach the top of the screen first, causing them to lose. ■

FACT

Because the game was in development before the Sonic cartoon aired, nine of the 13 robot opponents in this game only appeared for a split second in the first episode and were never seen again.

DRAGON BALL Z: L'APPEL DU DESTIN

Year 1994
Publisher Bandai
Developer Tose

ALTHOUGH JAPAN RECEIVED a host of Dragon Ball video games during the 8-bit and 16-bit era, many of them stayed in their native country due to a general lack of interest elsewhere. The exception was in France and Spain: *Dragon Ball Z* aired and was popular there, so occasionally those regions would get translated games. That's the case with L'Appel du Destin (The Call of Destiny), a one-on-one fighting game where players can choose from 11 characters from the series. As in similar Dragon Ball fighters of the era, the battle area is enormous and players can take to the skies whenever they like, with a dynamic split-screen effect making sure both remain on the screen at all times. ■

FACT

The game was launched in Portugal in three versions: the first two were just the Japanese cartridge bundled with a converter, and the third was the French cart. All three are considered rare.

DRAGON: THE BRUCE LEE STORY

Year 1994
Publisher Acclaim / Virgin Interactive
Developer Virgin Interactive

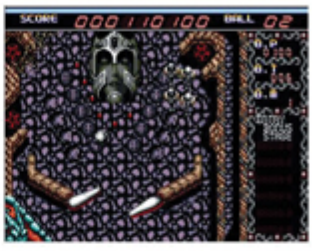
WHEN A MAJOR motion picture about the most famous martial artist who ever lived was released in cinemas around the same time as fighting games had become all the rage, it goes without saying that a video game adaptation was always going to happen. Sure enough, Dragon more or less follows the plot of the movie – focusing mainly on the fighty bits, obviously – as you play as Bruce Lee, as portrayed by Jason Scott Lee (no relation). The game received some criticism for having a fairly limited moveset despite having support for six-button controllers (and despite, you know, being about Bruce Lee, who has all the moves), but it did get recognition for its two-on-one battles, where Bruce would occasionally be outnumbered. ■

FACT

The Dragon movie was dedicated to the memory of Bruce Lee's son Brandon, who had died while shooting *The Crow* just a month and a half before *Dragon* was released.

DRAGON'S FURY

Year 1992
Publisher Tengen
Developer Technosoft



NOT TO BE confused with the roller coaster at Chessington World of Adventures (yes, American readers, that's a real thing), Dragon's Fury is a Mega Drive port of Technosoft's cult TurboGrafx-16 pinball game Devil's Crush. The table takes place over three screens, and has all manner of enemies and other destructible objects scattered around it, not least the giant woman's face right in the middle of the table (which eventually turns into a dragon the more you hit it). There are also six separate bonus stages to discover: these take you into different standalone rooms and have you destroying the likes of vases filled with bats, dragons spitting fire at you and a Giger-esque monster with a giant blue tongue made out of heads. Don't ask. ■

FACT

Both the Mega Drive and TurboGrafx versions were censored in the west. The Japanese version, Devil Crash, had hexagrams and coffins instead of the stars and vases seen in the western versions.

DRAGON'S REVENGE

Year 1993
Publisher Tengen
Developer Tengen

A YEAR AFTER Dragon's Fury came to the Mega Drive, Tengen decided to make its own sequel without the cooperation of either Technosoft or Compile (who had developed the original version). Dragon's Revenge now has a plot that takes up three pages of the manual: it's all about rescuing three heroes held captive by a magic spell cast on them by a dragon's companion called Darzel, but essentially it boils down to 'hit things with a ball again'. As in the previous game the table is a three-screened affair, but to be fair there's more of an aim this time: the bonus stages are used to free the three heroes, who in turn unlock multiball in the subsequent bonus stages as you try to reach the dragon. ■

FACT

The 'true' sequel to Dragon's Fury was Jaki Crush, which came to the Super Famicom in Japan in 1992 and replaced the dragon with a jaki (a Japanese demon).

THE DUEL: TEST DRIVE II

Year 1992
Publisher Ballistic
Developer Accolade

THE ORIGINAL TEST Drive launched on home computers in the late '80s, but Accolade decided that the sequel should get the console treatment too. Like its predecessor, Test Drive II focuses on driving obscenely expensive sports cars on dangerous highways while avoiding the cops, and this time you have three to choose from: a silver Porsche 959, a red Ferrari F40 or a black Lamborghini Diablo. The title underlines the main new feature in this sequel, however: the ability to take part in duels. Whereas the first game simply had you competing against the clock, this time you can have a one-on-one race against any of the three cars on offer. There are three types of scenery to choose from before your race: city, mountain or desert. ■

FACT

You only have a limited number of respawns after you crash, and the manual is philosophical about it: 'If you run out of lives… well, cheer up, even Rome fell.'

DUKE NUKEM 3D

Year 1998
Publisher Tec Toy
Developer Tec Toy

HERE'S A GAME that many thought would be impossible on the Mega Drive and many still don't even know exists. Duke Nukem 3D was released exclusively in Brazil by publisher Tec Toy, and is an extremely impressive port of a PC title, even though it's drastically different. It consists of nine levels based on Lunar Apocalypse, the second chapter of the PC version set in a spaceport. Its stages have been simplified significantly and now mainly consist of rectangular corridors similar to the levels in Wolfenstein 3D. Despite this, it still includes most of the PC game's enemies, seven different weapons and a bunch of the original sound samples too. It's far from the best version of Duke Nukem 3D but it's a fascinating accomplishment. ■

FACT

Retro restoration studio Piko Interactive acquired the rights to re-release the Mega Drive version of Duke Nukem 3D in 2015, meaning it could be bought in North America and Europe for the first time.

DUNE: THE BATTLE FOR ARRAKIS

Year 1994
Publisher Virgin Games
Developer Westwood Studios

THIS IS A Mega Drive port of the PC real-time strategy game Dune II (indeed, the European title for the Mega Drive version is Dune II). Although Westwood would eventually become better known for its Command & Conquer series of RTS games, Dune II was the one that laid the initial groundwork.

Players start off by choosing one of three Houses to pledge their allegiance to: Atreides (blue), Ordos (green) or Harkonnen (red). You then start off creating a construction infrastructure so you can harvest Spice, which can then be sold off to earn the money you'll need to build military units, grow your House's power and ultimately crush the others, taking over complete control of Arrakis. ■

FACT

The House Ordos doesn't actually feature in any of the Dune novels written by Frank Herbert. It was seen in the *Dune Encyclopedia*, a book designed to expand the Duniverse. Yes, the Duniverse.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: WARRIORS OF THE ETERNAL SUN

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Westwood Associates

THIS RPG IS based on the Hollow World campaign setting in Dungeons & Dragons and has the player's party being transported to a strange, red-hued world where 'the horizon slopes upwards in all directions'. Players can use the preset party already available to them or create their own four-character party, with each character adopting one of seven classes: Cleric, Fighter, Magic-User, Thief, Dwarf, Elf and Halfling. Outside exploration uses an isometric viewpoint whereas dungeon exploration is first-person, and battles are turn-based affairs. It's safe to say this was one of the more complex games on the Mega Drive: as well as the manual, it also came with a full colour 78-page hint book with battle advice, maps, spell information and a bestiary. ■

FACT

If you're confused by the developers of this game and Dune II, Westwood Associates was renamed Westwood Studios when Virgin Games merged with it in late 1992.

DYNAMITE DUKE

Year 1990
Publisher Sega
Developer Hertz

AROUND THE YEAR 2100, the evil Dr Neil Ashe creates an army of mutants that he plans to use to take over the world. There's only one man who can stop him: Colonel Duke Rippem, also known as Dynamite Duke, whose body was rebuilt after it was ravaged in a dynamite blast and who now has a deadly bionic right arm. Duke has to fight his way through Dr Ashe's six bases until he reaches the man himself and punches him into tiny bits. Originally released in arcades, Dynamite Duke is a lightgun shooter where players not only aim Duke's weapons but also move him left and right to avoid enemy bullets. If an enemy approaches up close, players can punch or kick them instead. ■

FACT

Seibu Kaihatsu, who developed the arcade version of Dynamite Duke, had released Dead Angle a year earlier. It played similarly but was a mobster-themed game where your player was represented by a silhouette.

DYNAMITE HEADDY

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Treasure

FEW GAMES ARE as quirky as Dynamite Headdy, a comedy platformer developed by the legendary studio Treasure. You play as the titular protagonist Headdy, who has to restore peace to his world by defeating Dark Demon, a nasty puppet king who's brainwashing all the world's puppets to do his evil bidding. Headdy's main trick is the ability to detach his head from his body and fire it at enemies, but things get really interesting when he swaps his head out for one of 17 novelty power-up heads. The Spike Head, for example, lets Headdy cling to walls and climb them, whereas the Pin Head shrinks him down to a tiny size, which lets him get through small gaps and reach previously inaccessible areas. ■

FACT

Sega told the game's programmer Masato Maegawa to make the game more difficult for the North American release, so that players wouldn't be able to complete it if they rented it.

EA SPORTS DOUBLE HEADER

Year 1993
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Park Place Productions

EA SPORTS DOUBLE Header is a compilation cartridge that was only released in Europe and included two of EA's most critically acclaimed sports games. The first was EA Hockey (which was the European version of NHL Hockey with all the official NHL licensing removed), and the second was John Madden Football, the first Mega Drive game in the Madden series of American football games. While it may seem strange for EA to take two of its finest games and essentially halve their value by selling them on a single cart for the price of one, it's important to remember that ice hockey and American football were considered niche sports in most of Europe, and bundling them both together made them a more appealing prospect. ■

FACT

The Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia were both in EA Hockey in 1991 but no longer existed by the time EA Sports Double Header was released. EA kept them in, unchanged.

EARNEST EVANS

Year 1992
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Wolf Team

DESPITE THE TITLE, this game actually follows the adventures of Earnest Evans III, the grandson of the original 1930s archaeologist and treasure hunter Earnest Evans. It's now the '80s and Earnest III has to stop a bounty hunter called Brady Tresidder from getting his hands on three ancient idols which, when collected, will let him summon an evil force called Mavur. Earnest is armed with his chain whip, which can be used to both attack enemies and attach to branches and hooks to swing across gaps. The game is notable for its unconventional animation style: Earnest is made of a number of different sprites that move independently, giving him a sort of ragdoll movement that looks strange, but is certainly unique. ■

FACT

In Japan, Earnest Evans is the prequel to El Viento. In the west, however, it's considered the sequel, hence the hero being the descendant of the original.

EARTH DEFENSE

Year 1995
Publisher Realtec
Developer Artisan

THIS UNLICENSED GAME is pretty much the most generic example of a shoot 'em up you could ever hope to find. Even the plot in the manual is bog-standard: 'space creatures' from another galaxy invaded the Earth and, after declaring war on the United Nations, won said war and are now in charge of 'the Earth's power'. All the Earth's finest scientists met up in a secret location and worked for months to create the most powerful secret weapon ever known: a plane called the Phoenix Spitfire. Naturally, you now have to fly the Phoenix Spitfire through a bunch of enemy-infested stages, shooting them all with an entirely predictable array of weaponry. The only real gimmick is the ability to temporarily create a shield with the C button. ■

FACT

Despite being called Earth Defense on the packaging, the title screen instead says The Earth Defend.

EARTHWORM JIM

Year 1994
Publisher Playmates / Virgin Interactive
Developer Shiny Entertainment

WHEN AN INDESTRUCTIBLE, high tech space cyber suit falls from the sky and lands neckhole-first onto an innocent worm, the worm suddenly evolves at light speed and becomes Earthworm Jim, an unwitting hero. When it turns out an evil Queen (whose name is too long for this entry) wants the suit to become more beautiful than her imprisoned sister Princess What's-Her-Name, Jim decides to head out and rescue the princess. Cue a hilariously bizarre adventure taking in such sights as a boss battle with a snowman in Hell, a bungee duel against a large snot monster and an escort mission where the pink puppy you're guiding to safety can turn into a huge beast and eat you if he takes damage. Oh, and the final stage is called Buttville. ■

FACT

The manual states that anyone who plays on the standard difficulty is probably enough of a fan that they call him 'EWJ', even though it uses more syllables than 'Earthworm Jim'.

EARTHWORM JIM 2

Year 1995
Publisher Playmates / Virgin Interactive
Developer Shiny Entertainment

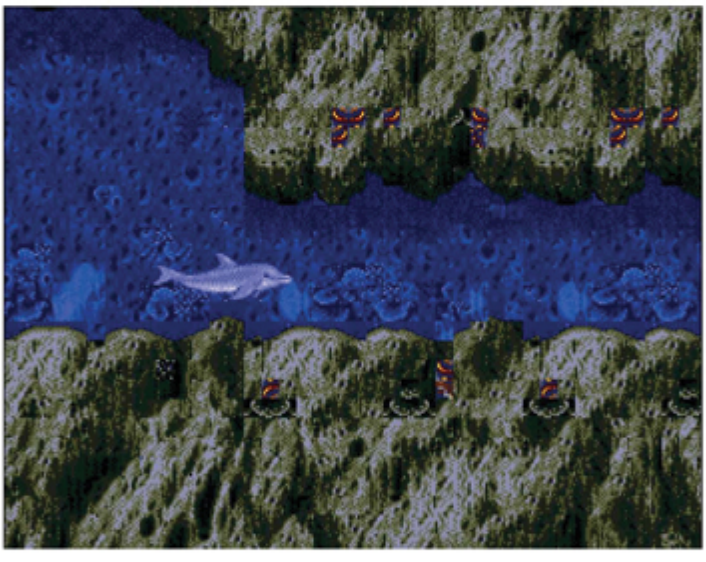
CLEARLY THE FOLKS at Shiny Entertainment hadn't managed to get all the zaniness out of their systems with the first Earthworm Jim game, because its sequel arrived 15 months later and the crazy factor was amplified significantly to boot. After Jim rescued Princess What's-Her-Name at the end of the first game, she (eventually) fell in love with him. Alas, this wasn't the happy ending the couple had hoped for, because before they knew it Jim's rival Psy-Crow had swooped in and kidnapped the princess. It's up to Jim to catch up with the pair and rescue his love for the second time before they reach the Lost Vegas system, where Psy-Crow can trick the princess into getting a shotgun wedding and can therefore become Monarch of the Galaxy. There are 10 brand new stages for Jim to make his way through in the sequel, each of which is memorable in its own bizarre way. Whether it's using your gun to drill your way upwards through a level completely covered in soil, using a giant marshmallow to save puppies who are being thrown out of a window, or trying to guide cows to their barns without them being abducted by UFOs, there's plenty of bizarre shenanigans involved here. As well as his usual gun and worm whip moves, this time Jim is also accompanied by a little green ball of snot called… well, Snott, who can grab onto similarly sticky green surfaces and help Jim swing across to out-of-reach areas. ■

FACT

The manual lists the table of contents, followed by the contents of a table ('legs, surface, wood glue, nails or screws'), then a table of continents (Africa, Asia and so on).

ECCO THE DOLPHIN

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Novotrade



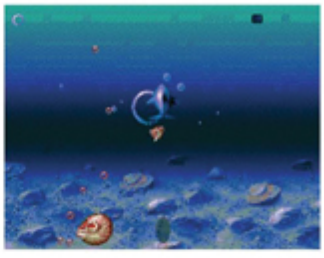
WHEN ECCO THE Dolphin was released, much was made of its tremendous visual design. At the time it was considered one of the most realistic looking games ever made, its impressive ocean environments perfectly complemented by the striking animation of not only its titular dolphin but all the sea creatures he encounters on their journey too. What a journey it is, incidentally: the game opens with Ecco and their friends being caught up in a giant waterspout, of which Ecco is the sole survivor. As they explore the ocean in search of their pals, Ecco eventually ends up in a sprawling adventure taking in the likes of the Arctic (where a wise old whale fills them in on the waterspout's history), the ruins of Atlantis, a time machine that sends them 55 million years into the past and even into outer space to fight a suspiciously HR Giger-esque alien final boss. Ecco has two main tricks up their sleeve, the first being a dash attack that's performed with the B button. This not only lets Ecco attack enemies by bashing their beak into them, it can also be used to charge into groups of smaller fish and eat some of them, regaining some health in the process. Ecco's other main ability is singing, which involves firing off sonar ripples. This can be used to speak to other animals and activate certain objects: alternatively, players can hold the button down and the sonar will return, presenting you with a map of the area using Ecco's echolocation abilities. ■

FACT

Ecco's gender is never mentioned at any point in Ecco the Dolphin. The first mention of their gender is in the manual for sequel The Tides of Time, where it's stated that Ecco is male.

ECCO: THE TIDES OF TIME

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Novotrade



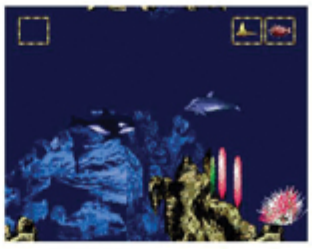
SINCE THE FIRST game sent Ecco millions of years into the past, it stands to reason that the sequel would have him travelling into the distant future instead. After saving his friends from the Vortex space aliens and returning to his home, Ecco soon discovers that the Vortex Queen isn't dead yet. He eventually travels to a possible happy future with flying dolphins and learns that in order to get this future he has to find a number of globes scattered across the ocean and use them to resurrect the Asterite, an ancient life-form that can give him the powers he needs to defeat the Vortex once and for all. Frustratingly for fans, the game ends on a cliffhanger that was never resolved. ■

FACT

The cover artwork for both Ecco and The Tides of Time was painted by Boris Vallejo, a world renowned fantasy painter who also created epic posters for movies like National Lampoon's Vacation and the Aqua Teen Hunger Force film.

ECCO JR

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Novotrade



AS ENTERTAINING AS the Ecco games are, they're also pretty difficult. This isn't ideal when your protagonist is a cute dolphin who may appeal to children. The solution to this was Ecco Jr, a spin-off game that looked and played like the other two titles but was far easier. Whereas the other games have an air meter, Ecco Jr has infinite air, and there are also no enemies in this game. Instead, players take on a series of missions, ranging from 'roundups' (like bringing a baby turtle back to its mother) to 'hide and seek' quests (where you use your sonar to find crystals, sleeping stonefish or what have you). There are three characters to choose from: Ecco, an Atlantic dolphin called Kitnee and a baby orca called Tara. ■

FACT

If you think Ecco is a strange name, think yourself lucky. According to designer Ed Annunziata, Sega's marketing team wanted to call it Botticelli because of the success of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

EL VIENTO

Year 1991
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Wolf Team

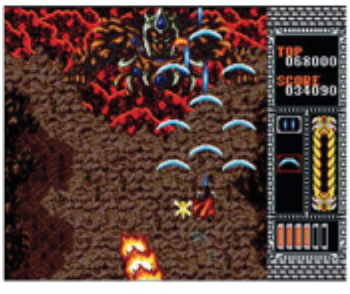
BEFORE EARNEST EVANS, there was El Viento. This action platformer is set in 1920s' Manhattan and follows Annet Myer, a distant relative of the evil god Hastur and the only human with the power to stop him. Unfortunately, an evil cult plans to team up with mob boss Vincente DeMarco (Al Capone in the Japanese version) and resurrect Hastur, so Annet heads off to try and stop them before they can build a massive shrine to him: a shrine they're planning to name the Empire State Building. Yup, that one. Annet is armed with a boomerang but along the way she can also gather a collection of magic spells including fireballs, water currents and wind cutters to help her defeat the numerous gangsters trying to gun her down. ■

FACT

El Viento was the first in a trilogy. The second was Earnest Evans and the third was Annet Futatabi, a Japan-only game where players controlled Annet again, this time in a beat 'em up.

ELEMENTAL MASTER

Year 1993
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Technosoft



IF IT WAS possible to crossbreed genres, Elemental Master would be the result of crossing an RPG and a shoot 'em up. The plot is pure fantasy RPG: a sorcerer called Laden has to make his way through the city of Lorelei and defeat his brother Gyra, the lord of catastrophe (I always thought that was Mr Bean). Elemental Master plays like a standard vertical scrolling shoot 'em up, except instead of flying a ship you control Laden as he traverses each level on foot. Stages have obstacles that block his path, and he can also be affected by icy paths and windy sections. Starting off with the ability to fire light blasts, he can eventually collect other elements, allowing him to shoot fire, water, wind and earth shots. ■

FACT

At the start of the game, Gyra pretends to be a good sorcerer called Aryg, because apparently all the magic in the world is no match for the old 'spell the name backwards' trick.

ESPN BASEBALL TONIGHT

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Park Place Productions

SONY IMAGESOFT RELEASED a quartet of sports games for the Genesis in 1994 covering four of America's most popular sports: baseball, hockey, American football and stock car racing. The games were branded with ESPN licensing, with each title named after a real-life ESPN show. Baseball Tonight not only has host Chris Berman presenting from the SportsCenter and Dan Patrick on commentary duties, it also includes the MLB licence, meaning all the team names, logos and uniform colours are accurate. The game's most unique feature, though, is its camera angle: the entire thing is played in front of a single camera sitting behind home plate. This was useful in terms of player immersion, but the low perspective made it difficult to catch any hits to the outfield. ■

FACT

Even though the SNES and Mega CD versions of Baseball Tonight were released in Europe, the Genesis version remained firmly in North America.

ESPN NATIONAL HOCKEY NIGHT

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Park Place Productions

BASEBALL FANS WEREN'T the only ones catered for in Sony's ESPN deal. National Hockey Night followed suit by including the full NHL licence (though, as with Baseball Tonight, this didn't extend to player names too). This time, ESPN's Bill Clement is sitting at the studio to present the show. Players can take part in an entire 84-game NHL season, including the Stanley Cup Playoffs. They can also participate in the NHL Skills Challenge, which consists of two mini-games: a 'Fastest Man' contest and a shooting contest. National Hockey Night is also one of the first games that allows players to choose between two separate viewpoints: either a side-scrolling camera similar to what you'd see on a TV broadcast, or a vertically-scrolling one for fans of EA's ice hockey games. ■

FACT

Bill Clement played in the NHL for 11 seasons and was an All-Star twice. He became a motivational speaker and released a book called *Everyday Leadership: Crossing Gorges on Tightropes to Success.*

ESPN SPEEDWORLD

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Park Place Productions

THE WORLD OF NASCAR didn't escape Sony and ESPN's wide-ranging video game deal, or rather it did: while Speedworld is based on the ESPN show of the same name and focuses solely on the world of stock car racing, it's missing the official NASCAR licence. Despite this, its 15 tracks are based on the real-life circuits used during the NASCAR season of the time. You can compete in a full, unbranded season, using prize money to improve your car and pit crew along the way, and you can also adjust your car's tyres, transmission, suspension and spoiler angle before each race. Drafting is very important in this game: using your opponents' slipstream and increasing your speed as a result is the key to overtaking them. ■

FACT

The Speedworld game is hosted by Dr Jerry Punch, a physician who's not only known for his racing and American football commentary but has also been ESPN's expert on medical issues.

ESPN SUNDAY NIGHT NFL

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Ringler Studios

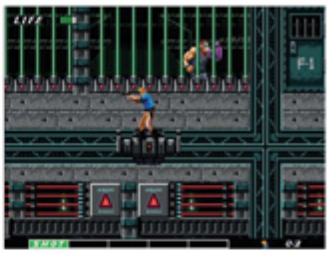
SONY'S TAKE ON American football is the only entry in the ESPN quadrilogy not to have been developed by Park Place Productions. That's not to say it isn't similar to its brethren in most other ways: for starters, it's got the official NFL licence, so once again all the team names and logos are accurate. It's got the option to either play an exhibition game or a full NFL season (along with a battery back-up to save your game). It's even got Chris Berman in it too: the guy's clearly working double shifts to cover both American football and baseball. The game boasts the 'first ever full field perspective', which essentially means that the camera angle is lower than in games like Madden so you can always see the end zone. ■

FACT

The manuals for Sunday Night NFL, Baseball Tonight and Speedworld have a mail order section where you can order a t-shirt, sweatshirt or cap with the game's logo on it. Nothing for National Hockey Night, though.

ESWAT: CITY UNDER SIEGE

Year	1990
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega



A MAJOR TERRORIST organisation called E.Y.E. is threatening to take over the entire world, so the government sends for a special group of soldiers called ESWAT (Enhanced Special Weapons and Tactics). As an ESWAT trooper, you have to blast through eight stages of enemies in order to reach E.Y.E.'s tactical complex and destroy it. While the first two levels are your typical run and gun affair, ESWAT gets more interesting from the third stage on, where you don a special 'Ice Combat suit' and essentially turn into a Robocop style cyber soldier. This exoskeleton gives you a bunch of new, more powerful weapons and also lets you fly, and while its larger size makes you more susceptible to attack it can also take more damage. ■

FACT

This game is regularly confused with Cyber Police ESWAT, an arcade game Sega released a year earlier. Although the premise is generally the same, both games are completely different.

ETERNAL CHAMPIONS

Year	1993
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega

WITH SO MANY publishers jumping into the fighting game arena and trying to create their own challenger to Street Fighter II, it's little wonder that Sega took it upon itself to make its own attempt. Eternal Champions gathers nine characters from various different time periods, who have all just died in unfortunate circumstances. They've been gathered together by the mysterious Eternal Champion and are being made to fight each other: the losers will stay dead, but the winner will return to a few seconds before they died, giving them a chance to change their fate. Characters include Jetta (a circus acrobat from 1899), Shadow (a corporate assassin from 1993), Slash (a caveman from 50,000 BC) and RAX (a cyborg kickboxer from the twenty-fourth century). ■

FACT

UK magazine *Sonic the Comic* had two Eternal Champions stories. The first lasted five issues and had them working together like the Avengers, while the second lasted four issues and focused on 1920 cat burglar Larcen.

EUROPEAN CLUB SOCCER

Year	1992
Publisher	Virgin Games
Developer	Krisalis Software

IN THE EARLY '90s, Rotherham-based Krisalis Software developed Manchester United Europe, a football game for home computers that enjoyed some success. A home console port was the next logical step but rather than focusing mainly on Man United, the Mega Drive version instead included 164 club teams from all around Europe, ranging from the obvious big guns like Liverpool, Marseille and AC Milan to more niche teams like Shamrock Rovers, Sliema Wanderers and Újpest FC. There's even room in there for the mighty Celtic Football Club. Players can enter a European Cup tournament where 32 teams compete in a knockout tournament. If you manage to win the European Cup, you'll play in the Super Cup, a one-off match against a non-European team like Uruguay's Club Atlético Peñarol or Argentina's Estudiantes. ■

FACT

The password 'THREE_SHREDDED_WHEAT' lets you hit extremely powerful shots. It's a reference to an old UK marketing slogan for Shredded Wheat cereal, which was 'bet you can't eat three'.

EVANDER HOLYFIELD'S REAL DEAL BOXING

Year	1992
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Acme Interactive

THIS IS A console port of Acme Interactive's PC and Amiga game ABC Wide World of Sports Boxing (known as TV Sports Boxing in Europe) with the added presence of Evander Holyfield, who at the time had 27 fights, 27 wins and two ears. You can play exhibition matches as the man himself, but the game's main selling point is its career mode, where you create a new boxer who's 30th in the world and work him up the ranks. After each fight you can build your stats by choosing from a series of activities, but you can't just skulk around the lower rankings until you're all powered up: after 40 fights your boxer retires so you have to get a move on and become the champ while he's still young. ■

FACT

If you fancy taking an easier route to the top, naming your boxer THE BEAST will turn him green and give him maximum stats.

EX-MUTANTS

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Malibu Interactive

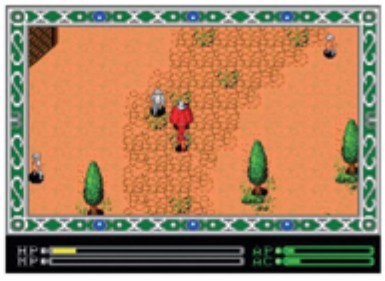
EX-MUTANTS WAS A comic series that was clearly intended to capitalise on the success of the *X-Men*, even though it sort of told the opposite story: after the Third World War the Earth's population has been horribly mutated, but there are a special few who have been transformed back into humans. They aren't really superheroes, then, unless you count being completely average as a superpower. This action platformer is based on the comic and lets you choose between two heroes – the slow and powerful Ackroyd or the speedy but weak Shannon – as they try to rescue the rest of the Ex-Mutants from the evil ruler Sluggo, a 'neat freak' mutant who's hell-bent on killing anyone who looks remotely human. Look, I don't know. ■

FACT

The original artist on Ex-Mutants was Ron Lim, who would go on to pencil most of Marvel's *Infinity Gauntlet*, *Infinity War* and *Infinity Crusade* series in the early '90s.

EXILE

Year 1992
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Micro Factory



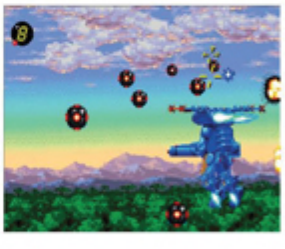
SADLER IS A wandering desert warrior who once led a revolt that brought peace back to a small village. Now that village is being invaded by a new threat, the military of a rival country called Luciel, so Sadler is once again asked to protect the town. Exile is the second game in an RPG trilogy and is heavily religious in nature, with Sadler eventually being tasked by the leader of the Knights Templar with finding the Holimax, a holy artefact that is said to unite the world under one God. Its bonkers quest has you travelling to France, Cambodia, Japan and even time travelling to the garden of Eden, with a bit of Masonic murder thrown in for good measure. ■

FACT

The first game, XZR, was never released outside of Japan. Probably because it ends with Sadler warping to the twentieth century and assassinating the Russian General Secretary and American president.

EXOSQUAD

Year 1995
Publisher Playmates / Virgin Interactive
Developer Novotrade



BASED ON UNIVERSAL'S short-lived animated series, ExoSquad is based around a war in 2040 between the Terrans (humans) and Neosapiens, a genetically superior race who were created in labs to work in mines but, typically, decided to fight back. You play as Lieutenant JT Marsh, Sergeant Rita Torres and Wolf Bronsky, who conveniently happen to be three members of the Able Squad, an elite unit who specialise in piloting giant mechs called E-Frames. The game consists of three unique types of stage: flying sections (where you gun down enemies from a third-person viewpoint similar to Sega's Space Harrier), side-scrolling sections (where you shoot even more baddies) and one-on-one duels (which control more like a fighting game). ■

FACT

The ExoSquad cartoon was praised for its excellent story and characters, but was cancelled after only two seasons, leaving fans with a frustrating cliffhanger.

EXODUS: JOURNEY TO THE PROMISED LAND

Year 1993
Publisher Wisdom Tree
Developer Wisdom Tree

BIBLE AVENTURES WASN'T the only holy birth that Christian game developer Wisdom Tree oversaw. Exodus is about the second book in the Bible (after all, Genesis was already taken), specifically the story of Moses leading the Israelites to the promised land. The game is an imitation of Boulderdash, and has you playing as Moses as he makes his way through 100 mazes and collecting Manna. Moses can fire the Word of God as a projectile to defeat enemies, and also remove any other obstacles in the way including bushes, brambles and rocks: or, as they're known here, 'Murmurings of the Israelites', 'Doubting God' and 'Obstacles of Faith'. There are also 250 Bible trivia questions, just in case you weren't paying attention. ■

FACT

Before it started specialising in Christian games, Wisdom Tree was known as Color Dreams. Exodus was originally released on the NES as Crystal Mines before being rebranded with this holy makeover.

F1

Year 1993
Publisher Domark
Developer Lankhor

DOMARK'S F1 IS actually a sequel of sorts to French developer Lankhor's racing game Vroom, albeit one that's spruced up with an official Formula One and FIA licence. This means all the real-life drivers in the 1993 F1 season are present and accounted for here, with the exception of Ayrton Senna (who was exclusively appearing in Ayrton Senna's Super Monaco GP II). 11 of the 16 tracks from the 1993 season are featured here, as well as the Le Castellet track – where the French Grand Prix used to be held until 1990 – bringing the total to 12. There's an optional Turbo mode, which reduces the sizes of some of the game's sprites to make the game run faster and look smoother as a result. ■

FACT

The Circuit Paul Ricard in Le Castellet was the venue for the French Grand Prix for most of the '70s and '80s until the GP was moved to Magny-Cours. It returned for the 2018 F1 season.

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION

Year 1995
Publisher Domark
Developer Peakstar Software

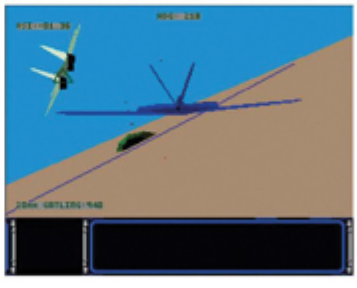
THE SEQUEL TO F1 was only released in Europe and offered numerous improvements over its predecessor. Whereas in the first F1 you had to play as yourself in the fictional Domark team, the World Championship Edition lets you join one of the eight real-life teams, replacing one of the actual racers who took part in the 1994 season (so if you ever dreamed of booting Jean Alesi out and racing for Ferrari alongside Gerhard Berger, now's your chance). All 16 tracks are now available, and they appear in the same order as they do in the 1994 season, making it about as authentic as it could have been at the time. It isn't all good news: the Turbo mode was removed for this game. ■

FACT

Ayrton Senna tragically died three races into the 1994 season and was replaced by David Coulthard (and Nigel Mansell in some races). Coulthard therefore races for Williams in this game despite having not started the season.

F-117 NIGHT STORM

Year 1993
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Electronic Arts



THIS EA COMBAT flight simulator puts you behind the controls of the Lockheed F-117 Nighthawk stealth fighter. Players take part in 30 missions taking place in the likes of Bosnia, Cuba, Grenada, Korea, Libya, Panama, Peru and Saudi Arabia. The manual opens with an introduction from the game's designer, Michael Kosaka, who explains that because of the plane's unique stealth capabilities a lot of artistic license had to be taken to actually make the game fun (such as making it possible to be spotted and shot at). There are six types of weapon you can unlock over the course of the campaign, from AGM-65E and AGM-65A 'fire and forget' Maverick missiles to laser-targeted GBU-27 A/B Paveway III bombs. ■

FACT

As the game progresses you unlock variations on the F-117 such as the F-117C and F-117E. These didn't exist in real life. In fact, the F-117 had no air-to-air missile capability either.

F-15 STRIKE EAGLE II

Year 1993
Publisher MicroProse
Developer MicroProse

MICROPROSE GAINED A reputation in the '80s and '90s as one of the finest developers and publishers of air combat games on home computers, though occasionally it dabbled in console ports too. The Mega Drive version of F-15 Strike Eagle II is a prime example, with players putting a McDonnel Douglas F-15E through its paces in six different scenarios: Libya (in a mission called Across the Line of Death), The Gulf (Keeping the Sea Lanes Open), Vietnam (America's Longest Air War), the Mid-East (Eagles vs MIGs), Nordkapp (Into the Soviets' Backyard) and Europe (Red Storm Raging). In-air objectives aren't the only part of this game: in higher difficulties you'll need to be able to successfully take off and land without crashing too. ■

FACT

A port of the original F-15 Strike Eagle was released on the Game Gear in 1993. Given that it originally launched on Atari 8-bit systems in 1984, the Game Gear version is noticeably more attractive.

F-22 INTERCEPTOR

Year 1991
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Electronic Arts

IF F-117 NIGHT Storm was a difficult game to make because of the real-life plane's attributes, imagine how tricky it was to develop F-22 Interceptor given that the first Lockheed Martin F-22 Raptor wouldn't actually go into production for another five years. The game contains over 100 missions split over four different theaters – the United States, Korea, Iraq and Russia – and you can choose from a decent selection of weapons to arm your F-22 with, ranging from AIM Sidewinders to HVR-1 air-to-ground rockets. Basic polygonal graphics are used to give the game a more realistic feel: this also lets the players switch to a chase view behind the plane to make bombing easier and give you a better idea of your surroundings. ■

FACT

The back of the North American version's manual has an early ad for Desert Strike, only at this stage it has the slightly less subtle title Apache AHX: Desert Madman.

THE FAERY TALE ADVENTURE

Year 1991
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer New World Computing

ORIGINALLY RELEASED FOR the Amiga in 1987, The Faery Tale Adventure is an action RPG telling the story of three brothers from a small village in the land of Holm: Julian (the brave one), Phillip (the lucky one) and Kevin (the kind one). When Holm is threatened by an evil necromancer, the mayor asks the brothers to head out and rescue a magical talisman, because it's the only thing that can protect the village. The game was designed by David 'Talin' Joiner to act like a fairy tale, hence the focus on stats like bravery, luck and kindness rather than traditional fantasy RPG ones such as strength, intelligence and dexterity. Talin also designed the game's dialogue box to be written in a narrative style, as if the tale was being told to the player. ■

FACT

The word 'fairy' has many old spellings. According to Talin, the choice of 'Faery' in the title was completely random. 'If I were to make the choice today I'd probably pick 'faerie',' he writes on his blog.

FAMILY FEUD

Year 1993
Publisher GameTek
Developer Eurocom

NAME SOMETHING CHILDREN have difficulty learning to use. If you answered 'the controls of a Boeing 747-8 Continental' you'd technically be correct, but maybe you aren't the sort of player best suited to *Family Feud*, the much-loved TV game show where contestants try to guess the most popular answers given by panels of 100 people. There are over 4,000 questions in the game, ranging from 'name something men try to impress women with' (top answer: money) to 'name an article men are compared to, other than weasels' (top answer: rat). Not all the questions are man-hating in nature, meaning there's something here for everyone, though some of the questions are a tad out of date now: don't get us started on 'at what sport do you think a woman could beat a man'. ■

FACT

In case you're curious, the answers to the question about children are Silverware, Bicycle, Toilet, Pencil, Scissors, Shoelaces and Telephone. As for the one about women playing sports, tennis was the top answer.

FANTASIA

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Infogrames

TO CELEBRATE THE 50th anniversary of Disney's iconic movie *Fantasia*, Sega teamed up with Infogrames to create this platformer loosely based on the film's most famous segment, The Sorcerer's Apprentice. As Mickey sleeps in his master's dungeon, a wicked wind slips in, steals the master's musical notes and carries them off to Bald Mountain. So begins a journey through Fantasia's water, earth, air and fire worlds, accompanied by classical music by the likes of Stravinsky, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky. Mickey has to find a certain number of notes (or alternatively score a certain amount of points) in each world before he can progress to the next one. Although visually impressive for its time, Fantasia drew heavy criticism for its frustrating gameplay. ■

FACT

Sega's then head of product development Ken Balthaser regrets rushing Fantasia's release. 'I truly wish I hadn't,' he told fan site Sega-16, stating that 'the game was just simply unplayable'.

FANTASTIC DIZZY

Year 1993
Publisher Codemasters
Developer Chameleon Team

DIZZY WAS ONE of the most iconic British gaming characters in the '80s and early '90s. While the majority of his fanbase came as a result of his appearances on home computers, Fantastic Dizzy was one of a handful of games in the series that were ported to consoles. The evil wizard Zaks has captured Dizzy's cheerleader girlfriend Daisy and put a curse on the rest of the Yolkfolk, so Dizzy has to rescue her via an elaborate series of puzzles that require him to collect items from elsewhere and use them on specific obstacles (as is the standard procedure in most Dizzy games). Along the way you meet all the other Yolkfolk, including the constantly sleeping Dozy, laidback hippy Dylan and the painfully '90s Denzil, complete with large shades and Walkman. ■

FACT

Dizzy got his name from the way he somersaults when he jumps and does a forward roll when he lands, leading his creators the Oliver Twins to assume it must make him dizzy.

FANTASTIC DIZZY & COSMIC SPACEHEAD

Year 1994
Publisher Codemasters
Developer Codemasters

IF YOU'VE ALREADY read the entry for Double Hits, this two-in-one package works in a similar way. Whereas Double Hits included the not-very-similar Micro Machines and Psycho Pinball, for this release Codemasters decided to bundle Fantastic Dizzy and Cosmic Spacehead onto the same cartridge, which makes more sense: both games are platform adventures where collecting items is one of the central concepts. Much like Double Hits, though, there's no menu screen here that lets you choose between the two games. Instead, when you turn on the game you'll get either Fantastic Dizzy or Cosmic Spacehead, and if you decide you want the other game you simply hit the Reset button on the console: this makes the cartridge reboot and load the second title. ■

FACT

Despite the relative power of Sega's 16-bit console, the Mega Drive version of Fantastic Dizzy is missing one of the mini-games in which Dizzy has to ride a barrel down a river.

FATAL FURY: KING OF FIGHTERS

Year 1993
Publisher Takara / Sega
Developer Aspect

LEGENDARY ARCADE STUDIO SNK is well-known for its massive range of one-on-one fighters, but none of them may have happened had it not been for the success of its first effort, Fatal Fury (ported to the Mega Drive by Aspect). Players choose from one of three fighters – Terry Bogard, Andy Bogard or Joe Higashi – as they take on a series of opponents in the King of Fighters Tournament in an attempt to reach the evil Geese Howard and get revenge for his muder of Terry and Andy's dad. As the first game in the series, Fatal Fury has somewhat limited controls with only three attack buttons: punch, kick and throw. As well as the main story mode there's also a VS mode where all nine of the game's characters are available to play as. ■

FACT

Muay Thai master Hwa Jai and Bojutsu fighter Billy Kane feature in other versions of Fatal Fury, but are missing from the Mega Drive one.

FATAL FURY 2

Year 1994
Publisher Takara
Developer Aspect

WHILE THE FIRST Fatal Fury was memorable for being the first major fighting game from SNK, the second is perhaps a more entertaining game by today's standards because it builds on its predecessor in numerous ways. The number of playable characters in the main story mode has increased from three to eight, and you can now choose between 12 fighters in versus mode. The sequel also adds more attack buttons, evolving the previous game's punch, kick and throw buttons into light punch, heavy punch, light kick and heavy kick. The latter change does mean the 6-button controller is preferred, because performing heavy attacks with a 3-button controller is awkward (A+C for a heavy punch, B+C for a heavy kick). ■

FACT

Although it's generally believed that Fatal Fury 2 was never released in Europe, one or two copies of what appears to be a UK version have emerged over the years. At the time of writing, it's unknown where they came from.

FATAL LABYRINTH

Year	1991
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega

YOU ARE TRYKAAR, a courageous lad who's offered to enter the 'castle of doom' Dragonia and retrieve the Holy Goblet in order to prevent the world being plunged into eternal darkness. That's the cheery premise behind Fatal Labyrinth, a Sega-developed take on what these days is known as the rogue-like genre. Starting on the first floor of the castle's dungeon, you have to explore its various procedurally generated rooms in search of the staircase to the next floor, while also collecting weaponry, armour, food and other items to assist you. Naturally, the dungeon floors are also filled with monsters all ready for some turn-based combat action. When you reach the 30th floor you'll find the final boss, a dragon who's guarding the Holy Goblet and must be slain. ■

FACT

The term 'rogue-like' comes from the computer game Rogue, which first launched in 1980 on mainframe computers that were so basic the dungeon, hero and monsters were all represented by ASCII letters.

FATAL REWIND

Year	1991
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Developer	Psygnosis / Raising Hell

ORIGINALLY RELEASED ON home computers as The Killing Game Show, this action platformer was renamed for the Mega Drive: presumably this was an attempt to make the title a little less on the nose, but it seems a bit pointless when every stage begins with the message 'get ready to die'. Fatal Rewind is a futuristic game show where the aim is to make your way to the top of a series of levels cheerily called Pits of Death. Controlling a small robot armed with a gun, you have to continually head upwards, shooting at enemies, as a lethal fluid called DOLL (Deadly to Organic Life Liquid) slowly rises. Along the way you can collect numerous weapons, as well as other items like keys and health packs. ■

FACT

It would appear that the concerns around the original title weren't an issue in Japan, where the Mega Drive version is still called The Killing Game Show.

FÉRIAS FRUSTRADAS DO PICA-PAU

Year	1996
Publisher	Tectoy
Developer	Tectoy

ANOTHER GAME RELEASED exclusively in Brazil, Férias Frustradas do Pica-Pau is a platform game starring classic cartoon character Woody Woodpecker (the game's title roughly translates as Woody Woodpecker's Frustrating Vacation). While on holiday with his animal chums, Woody stops to take a group photo. When the camera flashes his pals are suddenly whisked away, replaced with a ransom note explaining that Buzz Buzzard has kidnapped them. Woody therefore has to run, jump and peck through six stages – including a snow stage, which doesn't make much sense given the idyllic sunny nature of the trip – rescuing each of his woodland buddies along the way. Naturally, his rapid-fire peck is his most potent weapon, but dodgy collision detection means it's not as effective as it could be. ■

FACT

One of the friends Woody rescues is Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, who was owned by Universal at the time and looked completely different to the original design created by Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks.

FERRARI GRAND PRIX CHALLENGE

Year	1992
Publisher	Flying Edge
Developer	Aisystem Tokyo

THIS FORMULA ONE game doesn't have the official FIA licence but it does at least have the Ferrari one. As well as all 16 tracks from the 1991 Formula One season, it also includes four bonus tracks set in Long Beach, Mid Ohio, Oyster Bay and Indianapolis. The modes are as you would expect, with the option to play a full championship season, a single race or a time trial. All the other driver and team names are fake but at least some of the alternatives are clever (if a little cryptic): for example, Williams has been replaced by Bally (both were pinball companies, you see) and Benetton is now known as United (as in the United Colors of Benetton). ■

FACT

The Japanese version was called F1 Hero MD and featured four different bonus tracks: Autopolis, Fuji Speedway, a training oval and a road course.

FEVER PITCH SOCCER

Year 1995
Publisher US Gold
Developer Silicon Dreams

AT FIRST GLANCE, Fever Pitch Soccer (known as Head-On Soccer in North America) doesn't look too different to the FIFA games you see surrounding it on this page, what with its isometric viewpoint. Rather than FIFA's attempt at a reasonably realistic football simulation, however, Fever Pitch focuses more on fast-paced arcade-style gameplay. Nowhere is this more clear than its star player system, where nine different types of player have special abilities others don't. These range from strikers who can shoot bendy banana shots and thunderbolt rocket shots, to cheaters who can dive to get free kicks (50 per cent of the time) and penalties (25 per cent of the time). There are 51 teams in the game, ranging from the heavy hitters (Italy, Germany, Argentina and the like) to relative soccer minnows (UAE, Zambia, Mali). ■

FACT

Silicon Dreams was US Gold's in-house development studio and mainly focused on football games, up until 2003 when US Gold (and everything involved with it) was bought by Eidos.

FIFA INTERNATIONAL SOCCER

Year 1993
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Extended Play Productions

EVERY LONG-RUNNING SERIES has to start somewhere, and this is where EA's FIFA – one of the best-selling video game franchises of all time – first kicked off. Opting not to go with the side-scrolling or vertically-scrolling viewpoints most football games of the era tended to use, FIFA instead offers an isometric camera, giving a more pseudo-3D view of the pitch. This is the first and only FIFA game to solely feature international teams, and there are 48 to choose from (as well as an EA All Stars team, made up of the best players in the game). None of the player names are real, so the likes of Italy's Roberto Favaro, England's Bruce McMillan and Germany's not very German-sounding Brian Plank became memorable names among FIFA fans. ■

FACT

The reason Brian Plank was such a prolific striker is because he was one of the game's programmers. He continued to work on the FIFA series until FIFA 2004.

FIFA SOCCER 95

Year 1994
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Extended Play Productions

THE INEVITABLE SEQUEL to FIFA appeared 11 months later and added a number of new features. The most notable of these is the addition of club teams: as well as an increase to 58 international teams (and five all-stars teams based on different continents), the game now includes club squads from the Brazilian, English, French, German, Italian, Dutch, American and Spanish leagues, for a grand total of 217 teams (the player names still aren't real, however). Other improvements include the addition of sound effects when you score: hitting the A, B and C buttons make 'GOOOAALLL', horn and firework sounds respectively. A new volley move makes for more variety in shots, and there's a new set play system for more elaborate free kicks. ■

FACT

Not all the additions in FIFA 95 are useful: a new sponsorship with Panasonic means some goal celebrations include a big Panasonic logo slowly scrolling across the screen.

FIFA SOCCER 96

Year 1995
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Extended Play Productions

BY THE TIME FIFA 96 rolled around, EA had started to focus on next-gen systems like the PlayStation and Saturn. It continued to support the Mega Drive too, though, and so the third entry in the series included its own fair share of new features. Player sprites were replaced with pre-rendered Silicon Graphics CG sprites designed to make the game look more 3D, and more new moves like dummies and nutmegs were added. Meanwhile, off the pitch, the number of leagues was extended to 11 with the addition of the Malaysian, Scottish and Swedish leagues, and the players' names were also finally real for the first time in the series' history, meaning poor old Brian Plank was finally replaced with Jürgen Klinsmann. ■

FACT

The North American version of FIFA 96 used a photo on the cover of Notts County's Andy Legg playing in the 1994 Anglo-Italian Cup final. This made Legg the first Welshman on a FIFA cover, long before Ryan Giggs and Gareth Bale.

FIFA 97

Year 1996
Publisher EA Sports
Developer XYZ Productions

ALTHOUGH EA WAS mainly concentrating on making next-gen FIFA games by this point, it still kept the series going on 16-bit systems for another couple of years. Despite the Gold Edition branding on the title screen here, this isn't the sort of 'legacy' edition EA releases on previous-gen consoles these days where all that's changed is the rosters. It still includes new features that weren't present in FIFA 96, most notably a new six-a-side indoor match type complete with a smaller, walled 'pitch' to play on. As well as new sound effects and crowd chants the goalkeeper's AI has also been improved to an extent, making it harder to score the absurdly long-range goals the early FIFA games were infamous for. ■

FACT

The PC version of FIFA 97 featured a mode that practically nobody bothered to try out: the ability to have a 20-player match over a LAN connection.

FIFA 98: ROAD TO WORLD CUP

Year 1997
Publisher EA Sports
Developer XYZ Productions

AMERICA WAS SEEMINGLY done with football by the time FIFA 98 rolled along, but Europeans were given one last taste of 16-bit FIFA goodness. Once again, to EA's credit, the main mode from the PlayStation, Saturn and N64 versions of the game was ported over to the Mega Drive one too: a Road to the World Cup mode where you could choose from a staggering 172 nations and try to qualify for the 1998 FIFA World Cup in France (congratulations, fans of the Republic of Maldives national football team, you made the cut). Minor tweaks were also made to the gameplay on the pitch, most notably improvements to one-touch play, making it easier to pull off quicker passes, headers and volleys. ■

FACT

The Road to the World Cup mode includes France and Brazil, even though they didn't need to qualify for the World Cup (since France were the hosts and Brazil were the 1994 winners).

FIGHTING MASTERS

Year 1992
Publisher Treco
Developer Aicom, ALU

IN A MATTER of hours, a giant red sun will go nova and destroy 12 separate star systems in the process. All isn't lost, though: an omnipotent race called the Primaries claim they have the power to save one civilisation from extinction. Each star system chooses their own champion, and the 12 take part in a fighting tournament to the death, with the winner saving not only their own rump, but the collective rumps of all their fellow men (or women, or elephant people, or bipedal horses). Fighting Masters is a basic fighting game that only gives the player two buttons – attack and jump – but you'll need to make the most of them if you don't want your people to become toasted marshmallows. ■

FACT

The Japanese version has a completely different plot about a dark lord allied Valgasu who's brainwashed the other 11 characters into fighting you.

FINAL ZONE

Year 1990
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Wolf Team

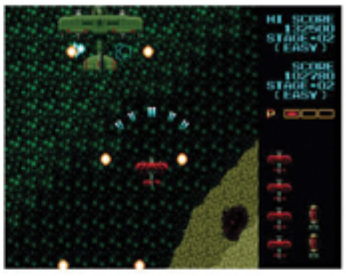
100 YEARS IN the future, weapons of mass destruction have been banned so nuclear bombs and missiles are no more. Instead, warfare is conducted using NAPs (New Age Powersuits), which are essentially mechs. Playing as the immaculately named Howie Bowie, a soldier of the El Sharia Military Nation, you have to make your way to the 'final zone', so called because it's the location of the last ever WMD, which needs to be destroyed. This is an isometric action game where you have to guide your NAP through 14 stages, destroying a set number of enemies in each. You can equip with up to 14 different weapons, using two at a time, but each time you take a hit you lose one of them. ■

FACT

Final Zone should actually be called Final Zone III. The first game was only released in Japan, while Final Zone II was a TurboGrafx-16 game. This is the third and final entry in the series.

FIRE SHARK

Year 1990
Publisher DreamWorks / Sega
Developer Toaplan



IN 1987, JAPANESE developer Toaplan (who would eventually become famed for its shoot 'em ups) released Flying Shark, where players controlled a biplane. A couple of years later, its sequel Fire Shark came to arcades, and the following year this Mega Drive port of Fire Shark arrived. The game is set in the present day and involves a mysterious biplane called Fire Shark which appears to be capable of destroying countless, far more modern enemy aircraft. How come? Well, it's being piloted by a time-travelling phantom who wants to face the impossible. Not that it's entirely impossible, mind you: the western version of the game is a little easier than the Japanese one (which has the much better title Shark! Shark! Shark!). ■

FACT

Fire Shark was published in North America by DreamWorks. This company had nothing to do with the animation studio that would be formed in 1994.

FLASHBACK

Year 1993
Publisher US Gold
Developer Delphine Software

FOLLOWING THE MASS critical acclaim it received for Another World (aka Out of This World), French developer Delphine Software decided to follow it up with an even more visually impressive adventure. You play as Conrad B Hart, a redheaded agent for the Galaxial Bureau of Investigation, who ends up crash-landing his hoverbike in the jungles of Titan after he was chased by a bunch of mutants. It's up to Conrad, who's lost his memory, to find out who he is, what's going on and what he can do to help. This wonderfully animated game takes place over seven separate stages taking Conrad through the likes of New Washington, a cheerily named game show called Death Tower and finally the mutants' home planet Morph. ■

FACT

The North American manual opens with a 14-page Marvel comic telling the story of the game. The European version ditches the comic, tragically.

FLICKY

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

FLICKY WAS ORIGINALLY released in arcades in 1984 as Sega's answer to Namco's Mappy. Playing as a small bluebird called Flicky, you have to hop your way through a series of maze-like platforming stages while trying to collect tiny yellow birds called Chirps. As you do this you have to avoid a menacing cat called Tiger and an annoying lizard called Iggy, both of whom are trying to capture the Chirps. Flicky can fight back by picking up items dotted around the stage (be that flowerpots, apples or what have you) and flinging them at his enemies. Each stage ends when Flicky finds every Chirp and guides them to a flashing exit door. If you take a bunch to the door at the same time your points bonus multiplies. ■

FACT

If the Flicky sprite looks familiar, it may be because he's one of the animals that flies away whenever an enemy is destroyed in Sonic the Hedgehog.

FLINK

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Electronic Publishing
Developer Psygnosis

ONE OF THE better European exclusives for the Mega Drive (although North American gamers could get it on the Sega CD), Flink is a platformer about a young apprentice wizard who has to make his way through the land of Imagica in search of four hidden crystals, each of which contains the spirit of a wise ruler who can help restore peace to the land and take it back from the nasty wizard Wicked Wainwright. Flink moves quite slowly but he makes up for it with his ability to cast spells, which he does by collecting specific ingredients and mixing them in his cauldron. There are seven spells in total, ranging from mini tornadoes and thunderstorms to the ability to summon a helpful demon. ■

FACT

A Genesis version of Flink was planned to be released in the US under the name The Misadventures of Flink, but this was ultimately cancelled before launch.

THE FLINTSTONES

Year 1993
Publisher Taito / Sega
Developer Taito

FEW GAMES START with a crisis as mild as that of The Flintstones, based on the vintage Hanna Barbera cartoon of the same name. Wilma's necklace has gone missing, as has the salt shaker she needs to season Fred's dodo eggs, so apparently that's reason enough to kick off a six-level platforming adventure where Fred is armed with a club. To be fair, it turns out that's only Fred's first mission: over the course of the game he also has to find Barney's fishing hook, see where Pebbles has run off to, locate Betty's missing ribbon, get Bamm-Bamm's club back from a dragon and chase after a giant egg. It's basically an excuse for a bunch of cutscenes that end with Fred saying 'Yabba dabba do!', complete with ™ symbol. ■

FACT

A game based on *The Flintstones* movie was also made for the Mega Drive. It was never physically released (which is why it's not in this book) but it was made available through the Sega Channel download service for a short while.

FLUX

Year 1995
Publisher Virgin Interactive
Developer Exp

IN A WAY, Flux is a project that was a bit ahead of its time as it's a music visualiser that's designed to work with the Mega CD (the cartridge is useless without one). Simply connect both systems together, insert the Flux cartridge into your Mega Drive and pop your favourite music CD into the Mega CD and Flux will analyse the music and turn it into one of 25 different visualisation patterns. Bearing in mind this was before the days when visualisers became more popular thanks to PC software like Winamp, Flux was something of a revolutionary product. It was only released in limited numbers and was exclusive to Europe, though, so copies are fairly rare to get hold of these days. ■

FACT

Flux was used to provide visual effects for the Pyramid Stage at Glastonbury in 1995 and the Megadog dance stage at the 1995 Phoenix Festival.

FOREMAN FOR REAL

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Software Creations

AS OPPOSED TO Fake Foreman, a game I just made up. This was Acclaim's attempt to follow-up its 1992 title George Foreman's KO Boxing with a boxing game that looked far more realistic than its predecessor (hence the name). It did this by giving Foreman and the game's 19 other boxers digitised faces, resulting in something that looked a bit like a boxing version of Mortal Kombat. Foreman is the only real, licensed fighter in the game: the others are fictional characters with names like Rob 'The Killer' Jones, JJ 'The Bull' Mazzo and Carmen 'Fist' Paradiso. They may not be real boxers but they do still have real faces, mind you: it's just not known whose faces they are. ■

FACT

The North American version of the game came with a free two-week membership for Gold's Gym, in case the sight of Savage Sammy Swift encouraged you to get buff.

FORGOTTEN WORLDS

Year 1989
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

FORGOTTEN WORLDS BEGAN life as an arcade game developed by Capcom, but Sega took over reprogramming duties for the Mega Drive port. The game follows two warriors called the Nameless Ones as they try to free their home, the Dust Planet, from an evil god called Bios. Playing either solo or in co-op, you have to fly around in a jetpack gunning down enemies in typical shoot 'em up fashion. The arcade version was notable for having a strange disc that could be rotated to shoot in all directions: the Mega Drive port emulates this by using the A and C buttons to rotate your character's aim clockwise or anti-clockwise (you can either use the B button to fire your gun or have it fire automatically). ■

FACT

Forgotten Worlds was one of the first games to include Zenny, a currency that would go on to appear in a host of other Capcom series including Breath of Fire, Mega Man Battle Network and Monster Hunter.

FRANK THOMAS BIG HURT BASEBALL

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Iguana Entertainment

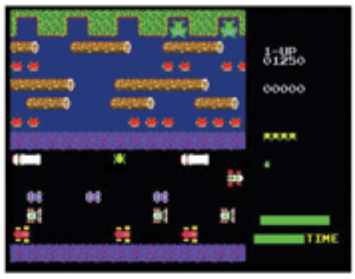
ACCLAIM'S TAKE ON baseball on the Mega Drive brings with it the presence of Frank Thomas, the five-time MLB All-Star who spent a decade and a half as the Chicago White Sox's star first baseman and designated hitter. Although there's no MLB licence here (meaning the team names are generic), the MLBPA licence is present, meaning all the player names are correct. As well as the option to play a full season (complete with a battery back-up to save your game), you can also take part in a Home Run Derby contest or Clutch Time, a mode where you're given a series of scenarios to try and complete. The game's most notable for its unique pitching system, which simply involves selecting direction, type, height and speed from a menu. ■

FACT

Frank Thomas got his nickname in 1992 when White Sox broadcaster referred to him as the 'Big Hurt' after he hit a home run over 450 feet.

FROGGER

Year 1998
Publisher Majesco
Developer Morning Star Multimedia



'IT'S BETTER TO burn out than to fade away', sang the legendary Neil Young once in a 1979 song. Presumably Mr Young was predicting the future lifespan of the Sega Genesis, because the final game released for the console was this underwhelming port of the 1981 arcade game Frogger. Despite being a 17-year-old game at the time, Frogger was more or less ported to the Genesis with no improvements, upgrades or special features whatsoever. That's not to say it was a lazy port, mind you: its sole developer Scott Marshall downloaded an early arcade emulator, disassembled the game ROM, rewrote the game logic in assembly language and made up the later levels (because he wasn't good enough to get past the 10th level). ■

FACT

Frogger is actually a more fitting final Genesis game than you may think: the original 1981 arcade version was developed by Konami but was manufactured and distributed by Sega.

FUN 'N GAMES

Year 1993
Publisher Tradewest / Sony
Developer Leland Interactive Media

THE SUCCESS OF Mario Paint in 1992 was arguably responsible for the subsequent release of the Sega Mouse (known as the Mega Mouse in North America). Despite this, only one studio decided to capitalise on the peripheral to make their own art package. Fun 'n Games consists of four separate activities, two of which – a canvas you can paint pictures on, and a basic music package where you drop notes onto a staff – are noticeably similar to those in Nintendo's game. Accompanying these are a basic dress-up game where you select different outfits, and a trio of skill-based games: a Pac-Man clone called Mouse Maze, a shoot 'em up called Space Lazer and the carnival-style Whack O Clown. ■

FACT

According to programmer Don Goddard, the development of Fun 'n Games took place over a chaotic four-month period during which time the programmer of the art section gave up halfway and he had to take over while also programming the other three.

FUNNY WORLD & BALLOON BOY

Year 1993
Publisher Realtec
Developer AV Artisan

THIS UNLICENSED RELEASE bundles together two games in the hope that combined they'll offer some value for money. Funny World is arguably the least accomplished of the two: it's a basic shooting gallery where the player has to shoot down a series of bears called Funnies: hit a certain amount and you'll move on to the next of 30 levels. Balloon Boy fares a little better but is still fairly basic in the grand scheme of things. You play as the titular Balloon Boy as he tries to clear 50 balloon-filled stages by shooting down said balloons with his gun. Some balloons will drop food, which can extend either your life or time, whereas others will drop enemies which have to be avoided. ■

FACT

Realtec was a Taiwanese company that specialised in unlicensed games. It also released the Genipak, a sort of imitation Game Genie that let players enter codes to unlock cheats.

G-LOC: AIR BATTLE

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Probe Software

AFTER THE SUCCESS of After Burner II in the arcades, Sega followed up with G-LOC (which stands for G-induced Loss Of Consciousness), a spiritual sequel played mainly through a first-person perspective. Whereas in After Burner the aim is simply to survive, in G-LOC you have to destroy a certain number of enemies within the time limit (using either your Vulcan cannon or your homing missiles) to move on to the next stage. The Mega Drive version is an impressively accurate port, although it does switch to a third-person perspective for certain stages (the arcade game only does this when an enemy locks onto you). This aside, most other features from the arcade version are here, including a section where you have to land your plane. ■

FACT

A deluxe arcade version of G-LOC came with a special cabinet called the R360. Players sat in a chair that could rotate 360 degrees, leading to plenty of upset stomachs. Sega made around 100 of these cabinets: Michael Jackson owned one.

GADGET TWINS

Year 1992
Publisher GameTec
Developer Imagitec Design

HAVE YOU EVER played a shoot 'em up and wished it was more like a beat 'em up? This outlandish concept was once attempted by Imagitec Design with Gadget Twins, a colourful romp that looks like a shoot 'em up but plays like a beat 'em up. Bop (the red one) and Bump (the blue one) are a pair of small biplanes who have been asked to head out and get the Gadget King's gem back so it can be returned to the Gadget Kingdom. Rather than firing bullets as in shoot 'em ups, Bop and Bump instead have extendable arms that attack with different melee weapons. The default is a boxing glove, but defeated enemies drop coins that can be spent in a shop to upgrade to the likes of hammers, bombs and 100-ton weights. ■

FACT

Despite being developed in the UK, Gadget Twins never launched in its home country. A version was made for the Commodore Amiga, but its composer Barry Leitch says he doesn't think it ever saw the light of day.

GAIARES

Year 1991
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Telenet Japan

MOST EARLY MEGA Drive shoot 'em ups were ports of arcade titles. Gaiares was a memorable release, then, because it was one of the first completely original shooters designed exclusively for the Mega Drive. It's set in the year 3000, where mankind has reduced the Earth to a polluted wasteland. Turns out this is even worse news than you'd think, because an intergalactic terrorist group called Gulfer are on their way to collect the polluted waste and use it to build weapons. Cue eight missions of shoot 'em up action with a unique weapon system: you're accompanied by a small satellite you can fire at enemies, and if it hits one it'll cling onto it, extract its weapon and bring it back to you. ■

FACT

The title is pronounced 'guy-a-ress': it's a portmanteau of 'Gaia' (meaning Mother Earth) and 'less' (meaning the pollution has led to Mother Earth's presence being lessened).

GAIN GROUND

Year 1991
Publisher Sega / Renovation Products
Developer Sega

IT'S THE YEAR 3000 (again), and for once everything is fine: there's no poverty, war or discrimination. Things are maybe too good, so the United Earth Government starts worrying what would happen if the planet ever needed to defend itself. This led to the Gain Ground system – a simulator that recreates war scenarios – but something went wrong and its creators were trapped inside it by hostile robots. Starting off with three soldiers, you have to make your way through its 60 stages, rescuing the captives along the way. When you find one they're added to your roster: there are 20 characters in total, each with their own weapons and skills. Levels are cleared when either every enemy is killed, or every active character reaches the exit. ■

FACT

The brilliant 3DS tactical RPG Project X Zone (which features characters from Sega, Capcom and Bandai Namco games) has two stages based on the Gain Ground simulator.

GALAHAD

Year 1992
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Traveller's Tales, Psygnosis

KNOWN AS THE Legend of Galahad in Europe, this action platformer originally began life on the Commodore Amiga under the name Leander before being ported to the Mega Drive. Playing as the titular son of Lancelot, your quest is to travel from Camelot to the eastern land of Kasako, retrieving a bunch of King Arthur's treasured artefacts that have been stolen by the evil wizard Miragorn. After this you have to head on to Tower Tarr, where Miragorn is based, and defeat him to save Princess Leandra of Psygnosia. The game is standard but solid platforming fare in which Galahad is initially armed with a sword, but can also gain extra weapons along the way by buying them from Weapons Masters' shops. ■

FACT

The Amiga version was developed by Psygnosis, who added secret Lemmings and Fatal Rewind easter eggs. Although Traveller's Tales ported the game to the Mega Drive, these easter eggs remain.

GALAXY FORCE II

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer CRI

IT MAY BE lazy to simply label Galaxy Force as 'After Burner in space', but it's an understandable claim. After all, both games are about flying through on-rails landscapes while shooting down enemies and ultimately avoiding them long enough to make it through to the next stage. Similarly, each arcade version received a 'sequel' a mere couple of months after the original launched – each of which was more of an update than a true follow-up – with each sequel then ported to the Mega Drive. Although Sega's home console isn't quite capable of pulling off the impressive sprite scaling effects seen in the arcade version (made possible through Sega's Y Board hardware), it's still a relatively faithful port when it comes to gameplay. ■

FACT

Following on from the G-LOC fact, Michael Jackson also owned a 'Super Deluxe' Galaxy Force cabinet, which was given to him as a gift when he visited Sega's Japanese offices.

GARFIELD: CAUGHT IN THE ACT

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

DESPITE THE POPULARITY of Jim Davis's *Garfield* comic strip character arguably reaching fever pitch in the late '80s thanks to cartoon and soft toy licensing, everyone's favourite lasagne-loving cat didn't actually appear in a home console game until this Mega Drive exclusive in 1995. After Garfield and Odie break their owner Jon's TV they try to fix it, but in doing so accidentally summon an electronic creature called the Glitch, which teleports Garfield inside the TV itself. The player has to get through five different levels, each with a different theme: horror, pirates, prehistoric, black-and-white movies (Casablanca, to be precise) and Egyptian. Garfield is armed with an appropriate weapon for each stage: a flaming torch in the horror level, a sword in the pirate one and so on. ■

FACT

Garfield was briefly made available through the Sega Channel download service in North America. It's claimed this version included a few extra stages, but this has never been fully confirmed.

GARGOYLES

Year 1995
Publisher Buena Vista Interactive
Developer Buena Vista Interactive

DISNEY'S ANIMATED SERIES Gargoyles enjoys a cult following to this day, with its tale of medieval Scottish gargoyles who've been moved to New York and come alive at night (with American accents, naturally). This Genesis game follows the show's protagonist Goliath as he makes his way through the city in search of the Eye of Odin, an evil artefact that corrupts anyone who owns it. Being a bit of a large lad, Goliath is a very powerful character to control: he can pick up enemies and throw them, perform huge uppercuts with his claws and divebomb onto people from the sky. While he can't quite fly, he can at least flap his wings to double-jump, and can also climb walls. He's rather versatile, then. ■

FACT

Gargoyles doesn't work on the Genesis 3. The Genesis 1 and 2 had a bug that stopped a certain instruction working properly: this was fixed in the Genesis 3, but broke Gargoyles as a result (because it relied on the bug being present).

GAUNTLET IV

Year 1993
Publisher Tengen
Developer M2

THIS SEQUEL TO the classic top-down Atari Games arcade title Gauntlet is one of the first games developed by M2, the Tokyo studio that would over the years become famous for its exceptional ports of retro games. In a sense it started this reputation here, because Gauntlet IV also includes a brilliantly faithful rendition of the original Gauntlet as a bonus. The real meat however is the game's Quest mode, a completely original adventure that diverts from the typical Gauntlet play style by adding light RPG elements. Instead of simply making your way through a series of linear levels as in the arcade game, Quest mode has you exploring a non-linear world where you can gain experience points to improve your abilities and earn gold to buy new weapons and items. ■

FACT

There are two different games claiming to be the third Gauntlet. Gauntlet III: The Final Quest is a PC game, whereas Gauntlet: The Third Encounter launched on the Atari Lynx.

GEMFIRE

Year 1992
Publisher Koei
Developer Koei

ALTHOUGH KOEI SPECIALISED in strategy games that were set during real-life moments in history, on occasion it liked to go a bit wild, let its hair down and make one with an entirely original story instead. Gemfire is an example of such unbridled hedonism: it's set in a magical kingdom in the middle of the northern seas called Ishmeria. An evil king has locked away his daughter, and only by uniting all six wizard gems can he be defeated. The problem is, six different clans each have a gem, and they all want to be ones to claim the throne and rule Ishmeria. So begins a turn-based strategy affair where you choose a clan and try to conquer all the others to collect all six gems. ■

FACT

Rather than recruiting soldiers as in similar games, Gemfire lets you recruit monsters instead: the likes of skeletons, orcs, gargoyles and giant lizard men can join your army.

GENERAL CHAOS

Year 1993
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Game Refuge

IF YOU'VE EVER been curious about real-time strategy games but worry that they may be a little slow-paced for your liking, General Chaos may be more to your taste. It tells the story of the titular General Chaos and his rival General Havoc, who had been pals since birth until a squabble resulted in a torn comic book and a ruined friendship. Over the years they each commanded large armies, but after years of stalemate fighting each other they've decided to settle it once and for all with a fight between five highly specialised soldiers (armed with machine guns, grenades, flamethrowers, bazookas and dynamite). Your job is to direct these soldiers during each skirmish in an attempt to kill the other five first. ■

FACT

The manual explains that Chaos and Havoc are their first names, and were named that by their parents so they were 'not likely to grow up to be tree huggers or flower sellers'. Quite.

GENERATIONS LOST

Year 1994
Publisher Time Warner Interactive
Developer Pacific Softscape

SEEMINGLY INSPIRED BY other 'cinematic' platformers like Flashback and Another World, Generations Lost tells the story of Monobe, an adventurer who wants to learn more about the origins of his people and so leaves them behind to explore the surrounding jungles and, eventually, the six sectors of his world. It soon emerges that it isn't a world at all: Monobe is living on a 'generation ship', a spaceship designed to search for a new planet to colonise after Earth was destroyed by pollution. Since so many generations have passed since the ship left Earth, people like Monobe didn't actually realise they were on a ship. This is, of course, an elaborate yarn created to justify running around, using an arm-mounted device to create energy ropes, and hitting various things. ■

FACT

Pacific Softscape was founded by former Western Technologies staff. Generations Lost was supposed to be a sequel to Western Technologies' 1993 X-Men game but Western retained the X-Men licence.

GENGHIS KHAN II: CLAN OF THE GREY WOLF

Year 1993
Publisher Koei
Developer Koei

IF THE SIGHT of Gemfire on the other page made you livid about Koei abandoning its 'true history' roots, Genghis Khan II should make you feel better. Conquering twelfth and thirteenth century Mongolia and then the world is the order of the day in this turn-based strategy game, and there are four different scenarios to choose from: Conquest of Mongolia (where you have to take over Mongolia with one of four different characters, including Khan himself), Genghis Khan's Grand Ambition (where you must take over the world), The Birth of the Yuan Dynasty (where Khan's grandson Kublai Khan is now ruler of Mongolia) and World Conquest (a scenario that follows on from the first one and is only unlocked when you beat that). ■

FACT

Nobody knows for sure how Genghis Khan died. Different books claim he was either killed in battle, died of an infection from an arrow wound, or fell off his horse and succumbed to the injuries sustained.

GEORGE FOREMAN'S KO BOXING

Year 1993
Publisher Flying Edge
Developer Beam Software

FOREMAN FOR REAL may have gone for photorealistic visuals when it launched in 1995, but its predecessor was somewhat less refined. KO Boxing uses a Punch-Out!! style viewpoint over your boxer's shoulder as you try to punch lumps out of your opponent. Rather than giving each fighter a detailed face, KO Boxing opts to put giant pictures in each corner of the screen so you can study their ugly mugs in more detail: these pictures get bloodier and more generally mashed in as the fight progresses, letting you see at a glance how much damage each fighter has taken. There are 15 fictional boxers for George to face, ranging from the eyepatch-wearing Eddy 'The Pirate' Preston to Larry 'The Surgeon' Scott, so called because 'he cuts like a knife'. ■

FACT

George Foreman named his five sons George Jr, George III, George IV, George V and George VI. He also had seven daughters, one of whom he named Georgetta. Because presumably Georgina would have been weird.

GHOSTBUSTERS

Year 1990
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega / Compile

DESPITE SIMPLY BEING called Ghostbusters, this Mega Drive exclusive isn't directly based on the events of the movie of the same name. Instead, it's a sequel set some time after the film, and opens with the Ghostbusters sitting at their headquarters bored out of their minds. You see, ever since the destruction of the temple of Zuul, New York has been more or less ghost-free, which is good for the city but bad for the Ghostbusters, who aren't making enough money. After a spate of earthquakes occurs, however, ghost sightings suddenly start springing up again and it's up to the spook-shooting trio to head out and save the day. Yes, that's right, trio: for some reason this game only stars Ray (Dan Ackroyd), Venkman (Bill Murray) and Egon (Harold Ramis), meaning fans of Winston Zeddmore (Ernie Hudson) have to make do without him. After choosing one of the three (represented as comedy 'big head and tiny body' versions) you have to jump and shoot your way through four levels taking place in different types of building: a house, an apartment, a cabin and a high-rise building. Beating the boss ghost in each stage rewards you a piece of stone tablet: collect all four and you'll access the final two levels, set in a castle (where you fight possessed versions of the other two Ghostbusters) and a deep hole where you face the final boss, Janna: the lord of death and destruction. Which is all well and good, but seriously, where's Winston? ■

FACT

According to Ernie Hudson, he auditioned to voice Winston in the Real Ghostbusters cartoon series and was turned down, but not before the show's director explained to him 'what Ernie Hudson in the movie did'.

GHOULS 'N GHOSTS

Year 1989
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

GHOULS 'N GHOSTS was a 1988 arcade sequel to Capcom's 1985 game Ghosts 'n Goblins, and was notorious for its high level of difficulty. This Mega Drive port, handled by Sega, was lauded at the time for being the most accurate home version of the game. The player controls Arthur, a knight who has to rescue the princess from the evil 'Prince of Darkness' (Satan in the arcade version) by fighting through five lengthy stages. His default attack is throwing swords at enemies but along the way you can collect different weapons like axes and a more powerful sword. Treasure chests may contain gold armour which lets you charge up special attacks, but may also contain a magician who can turn you into an old man or a duck. ■

FACT

The Mega Drive version of Ghouls 'n Ghosts was programmed by Yuji Naka, who would then go on to program the Sonic the Hedgehog games.

GODS

Year 1992
Publisher Mindscape / Accolade
Developer Graftgold

HERCULES FANCIES A bit of immortality (hey, after all, who wouldn't) and there's only one place he can get it: the City of the Gods. He has to explore four different areas – the city, the temple, the labyrinth and the underworld – and slay the hideous guardian lying in wait in each one. Defeat all four and everlasting life will be his. Gods is an action platformer with puzzle elements, and there are 15 different weapons to discover on your travels (though technically it's five weapons with three variations on each). The game was originally developed in the UK by The Bitmap Brothers for home computers like the Amiga and Atari ST. This Mega Drive port benefits from a better colour palette and a musical score. ■

FACT

A Game Boy Advance port of Gods was in development in the early 2000s but when its studio Crawfish Interactive shut down the project was abandoned.

GOLDEN AXE

Year 1989
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

FINAL FIGHT MAY be considered one of the most influential beat 'em ups of all time but Golden Axe actually appeared in arcades more than six months earlier. This fantasy beat 'em up, inspired by the Conan series, was a notable release in its own right and these days it's considered one of the most iconic Sega properties of the era. The evil Death Adder has taken over the land of Yuria, with thousands of villagers massacred at his hands. Now he's kidnapped the king and princess of Yuria, and on top of all that he's got his hands on the Golden Axe(™), Yuria's magical emblem. Things look grim, but fret not because three warriors, all of whom had family members killed by Death Adder, have arrived to save the day: barbarian and apparent Conan cosplayer Ax Battler, Amazonian swordswoman Tyris Flare and axe-wielding dwarf Gilius Thunderhead. Each is also capable of casting a different type of magic (volcano, fire and lightning respectively) and can build up their magic's strength by collecting the potions dropped by little elves. Along the way you'll also come across enemies riding little dinosaurs called Bizarrians: you can knock the enemies off them, mount them yourself and use their tail-whip, flame and fireball weapons. The arcade version of Golden Axe consisted of five levels: the Mega Drive port turns that into six (level 5 is split in two), but then continues the adventure with two more exclusive levels leading to a new final boss, the lethal Death Bringer. ■

FACT

Golden Axe was so heavily inspired by Conan that the boss twins at the end of the first stage have a death cry lifted directly from a scene in *Conan the Barbarian* where an enemy is impaled by a booby trap.

GOLDEN AXE II

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

IT'S BEEN THREE years since Death Adder was defeated, but now… well, he's still dead. That doesn't mean it's party time, though, because another evil chap is here to wreak havoc. The monstrous Dark Guld has taken the Golden Axe and wants to use it for nasty deeds, so Ax, Tyris and Gilius gather their weapons and head out for more slashy goodness. Golden Axe II isn't a port, it was developed exclusively for the Mega Drive. It plays similarly to its predecessor, though, with only minor changes (some of the Bizarrians are different species but have similar abilities, for example). The main difference is magic: whereas before casting it would remove all the magic you'd collected, now you can hold the button to decide how many magic potions to use up. ■

FACT

A third Golden Axe game (cleverly titled Golden Axe III) was released in Japan but didn't see a physical release in the west. It isn't great, though, so it's no big loss.

GOOFY'S HYSTERICAL HISTORY TOUR

Year 1993
Publisher Absolute Entertainment
Developer Absolute Entertainment

DESPITE BEING ONE of Disney's most well-loved characters, Goofy seems to have found himself in a janitorial job at Ludwig Von Drake's history museum. He isn't great at it though, so the professor gives Goofy an ultimatum: if anything goes wrong at the grand opening of four new museum exhibits the next day, he's fired. Pete, who's also a janitor, decides to mess things up by swapping the hats in each exhibit, so Goofy has to put them back. As he does this he daydreams about what it would be like in each era, so cue four stages set in prehistoric ages, Medieval times, Colonial America and the Wild West as Goofy uses his trusty Extend-O-Hand tool to defeat enemies. ■

FACT

Goofy's first appearance was in the 1932 cartoon *Mickey's Revue*. Although he was unnamed in that, he would eventually get the name Dippy Dawg before being promptly renamed Goofy.

GRANADA

Year 1990
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Wolf Team

ACCORDING TO GRANADA'S prediction for the future, nuclear warheads and intercontinental missiles were banned in the '90s. In the year 2016 – the period when the game is set – the best weapons available to armies are mobile ones. The best of the bunch is Granada, a Hypertek-Cannon Tank, which offers 'the most awesome array of weaponry ever assembled on a battlefield' (except for nukes, obviously). Playing as Granada, you have to explore the streets of Tobora in search of a giant flying battleship called *Astarsha*, and bring that sucker down. The game is played with a top-down viewpoint and players can shoot either a normal weapon or a 'blast', which is 16 times more powerful than a normal bullet. Blasts it is, then. ■

FACT

The game ends with Granada's driver walking away from an explosion as the credits roll. If you hold the A button down for 15 seconds as the credits end, he stumbles and falls over.

THE GREAT CIRCUS MYSTERY STARRING MICKEY & MINNIE

Year 1994
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom

THE SECOND GAME in the Disney's Magical Quest trilogy created by Capcom, and the only one on the Genesis (the first and third were Nintendo exclusives). When Mickey and Minnie decide to visit the circus to enjoy some good old-fashioned festivities they arrive to discover that every single person has gone missing. The pair decide to go looking for everyone, starting with Donald and Pluto, to see if they can figure out what's happened. The main gimmick in this platformer is the ability to unlock three different outfits, each with their own special abilities. The Sweeper Outfit lets them suck up enemies with a vacuum cleaner, the Safari Outfit lets them grapple and swing off blocks and the Western Wear gives them a cork gun and a hobby-horse. ■

FACT

Because it stars two characters (the first Magical Quest only starred Mickey), this game supports a two-player co-op mode. Mickey and Minnie have no real differences in how they play, though.

THE GREAT WALDO SEARCH

Year	1992
Publisher	THQ
Developer	Radiance Software

BASED ON A book that UK readers may know better as *Where's Wally? The Fantastic Journey*, The Great Waldo Search is the video game version of the third book in the Where's Wally / Waldo series. The game features five stages, each based on scenes from the book: the Carpet Flyers, the Underground Hunters, the Battling Monks, the Unfriendly Giants and the Land of Waldos. In each stage you have to find two things: Waldo himself and Whitebeard's scroll. If you want extra points you can try to find his dog Woof's bone, which takes you to a mini-game where he rides a flying carpet trying to collect more bones. The game is incredibly short and eagled-eyed players can beat it in a few minutes. ■

FACT

The game's theme music is similar to that of the *Where's Waldo / Wally* animated series which ran for 13 episodes in 1991. Waldo was voiced by Townsend Coleman, better known as ninja turtle Michelangelo.

GREATEST HEAVYWEIGHTS

Year	1993
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega

GIVEN THAT EVANDER Holyfield's Real Deal Boxing was probably one of the better boxing games on the Mega Drive, its quality was rewarded with this sequel that added more real-life legends from the history of boxing to the mix. Joining Holyfield this time are Muhammad Ali, Jack Dempsey, Joe Frazier, Larry Holmes, Joe Louis, Rocky Marciano and Floyd Patterson, allowing players to put together fantasy bouts and see who really was the best of all time. This sequel also includes support for the 6-button controller, making it easier to pull off left and right uppercuts with the X and Z buttons. There's a career mode where you make your own boxer, fight your way through 30 other original creations and then take on the eight legends. ■

FACT

Each boxer has their own catchphrase that can be used as a taunt. Rocky Marciano says 'I'm gonna embarrass you' in what can only be described as a bad impression of Al Pacino in *Scarface*.

GREENDOG: THE BEACHED SURFER DUDE!

Year	1992
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Interactive Designs

GREENDOG WAS A character created by Californian surfer Ric Green for his surfing board game, Surf Trip. After a marketing deal with merchandise company Applause went wayward, Sega took on the 'brand' and made this game. After Greendog finds himself on the receiving end of a particularly gnarly wave (as the kids say), he ends up stranded on a beach. Even worse, he's now got a cursed pendant stuck on his neck, and the only way to get it off is to find the six pieces of the Surfboard of the Ancients. His moves are typically surfer-like: he attacks enemies with a flying disc, he drinks cola to replenish his health and he can collect umbrella hats to become invincible (because who doesn't feel invincible wearing one of those?). ■

FACT

According to a 1989 article in the *LA Times*, Applause wanted 'to slap Greendog on everything from lunch buckets to bed linens to Nintendo cartridges'. Well, close.

GRIND STORMER

Year	1994
Publisher	Tengen
Developer	Tengen

GRIND STORMER WAS originally released in arcades by shoot 'em up experts Toaplan, before Tengen ported it to the Mega Drive a year later. It's fairly straightforward shoot 'em up fare – make your way through six stages, blowing everything up – but it's nevertheless one of the better examples of the genre on the console, despite flickering sprites. The Japanese version of the game was called V-Five and had one major gameplay difference: rather than simply collecting power-ups and having them applied instantly, instead the game used the Gradius method of advancing a power-up bar at the bottom of the screen and pressing B to apply it when you want. Luckily, V-Five is available as an option here, so you get the best of both worlds. ■

FACT

A working North American copy of Grind Stormer is rare to find these days, due to a defective print run that meant many cartridges started failing over time.

GROWL

Year 1991
Publisher Taito
Developer ITL

KNOWN IN ITS native Japan as Runark, Growl is a beat 'em up with an animal welfare message (a PETA 'em up, if you will). You play as one of four special agents for PAWS –the Protectors of Animals World Society – and have to infiltrate the port city of Machanga, where an illegal animal poaching operation is going on courtesy of RAPO, the Rendow Animal Protection Organisation (and if that sounds nice, don't be fooled: it's obviously just a front). Throughout its seven levels you'll come across a variety of weapons including a knife, an iron bar, a whip and even more severe offerings like a pistol, an AK-47 and a rocket launcher (because apparently animals' lives are worth saving but humans are expendable). ■

FACT

The arcade version of Growl was added to the Taito Legends 2 compilation on PS2, Xbox and PC. It was slightly censored to remove flying body parts during explosions.

GUNSHIP

Year 1994
Publisher US Gold
Developer Probe / Krisalis

THIS EUROPE-ONLY RELEASE is a port of MicroProse's home computer game of the same name, though the term 'port' is a loose one here because the Mega Drive version is more arcade-like than its simulator sibling. The game puts you behind the controls of an Apache AH-64A, one of the most well-known attack helicopters, as you take part in a series of missions across four global theatres: the Middle East, Asia, South America and the Arctic. After choosing your mission and using a map screen to set your route (while paying attention to your fuel) it's time to set out. Most missions are played with two different viewpoints: a first-person cockpit view, followed by a 2D side-scrolling view where you go all guns blazing. ■

FACT

Gunship's enthusiasm for its subject matter can't be questioned: beat the game and the credits end with: 'You've just been flying the most awesome piece of military hardware in the history of aerial combat!'

GUNSTAR HEROES

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Treasure

WHEN KONAMI DEVELOPER Masato Maegawa and several of his colleagues submitted a concept for a new run and gun action game with an 'anything goes' mindset, Konami executives rejected it. Frustrated, the team left Konami in 1992 and formed a new studio called Treasure, determined to make sure their game concept would become reality. The result was Gunstar Heroes, a game that not only was greatly loved by critics and players alike, but instantly cemented Treasure's reputation as a studio that specialised in high quality action games. The game follows Gunstar Red and Gunstar Blue as they try to find four mystical gems in order to prevent the evil Colonel Red from launching Golden Silver, a giant robot that has the power to suck their planet dry of resources. At first, you're given four different stages to choose from: a village built around ancient ruins, an underground mine (complete with mine cart stage), a flying battleship and Black's Dice Palace (an innovative board game stage where each space you land on brings up either a unique mini-boss fight or some power-ups). Beat all four of these and you'll then take on the final three stages in a more linear fashion. Gameplay is typical run and gun style but the game's main gimmick is the weapon combinations: there are four different weapons to choose from which fire plasma shots, electricity, homing missiles or flames, and you can either fire them separately or put together one of ten different combinations for new weapons. Combining the flamethrower and the homing missiles, for example, gives you homing fireballs. ■

FACT

Treasure was officially founded on 19 June 1992. According to an interview with Gamefan magazine, Maegawa gave the studio its name because he wanted it 'to be a treasure to this industry'.

GYNOUG

Year 1991
Publisher DreamWorks / Sega
Developer NCS / Cube

ICCUS IS THE 'planet of the flying men', but even flying men are susceptible to viral infections. This is a particularly nasty one: it's mutated into the grotesque Mutants of Iccus, led by the evil Destroyer, and is taking over the planet. It's up to Wor, one of the best battle masters on Iccus, to fly across his world and clear it of mutant scum. Gynoug (known as Wings of Wor in North America) is a horizontal shoot 'em up with six levels (each with large mid-level and end-of-level bosses). Along the way Wor can collect scrolls that give him magical powers: these can be offensive (like a magic homing arrow or a thunderbolt) or defensive (an aura shield or the ability to summon guardian angels to protect you). ■

FACT

The manual deliberately keeps the last level a secret, simply saying: 'PREPARE FOR THE WORST!' It turns out it's a boss rush stage, where previous bosses have to be beaten again to reach the Destroyer.

HARD DRIVIN'

Year 1990
Publisher Tengen
Developer Sterling Silver Software

THE 1988 HARD Drivin' arcade game was one of the most groundbreaking games of its time, combining one of the first ever polygonal racing environments with a force-feedback steering wheel for a true feeling of immersion. This Mega Drive port is impressive given the difference in power but suffers from cutbacks, most notably the severely reduced frame rate: the game runs at roughly six frames per second. The game itself is a time trial based affair, with the player choosing between two different tracks, Race and Stunt. The Race track is self-explanatory but the Stunt track consists of a number of wild jumps and even a loop-the-loop. Simply finishing the course in one piece is a feat in itself: an impressive replay system shows you another angle when you inevitably crash. ■

FACT

If you want a more accurate version of Hard Drivin', it was included in Midway Arcade Treasures 2 on PS2, GameCube and Xbox.

HARDBALL!

Year 1991
Publisher Ballistic
Developer Accolade

THE FIRST IN a series of six baseball games by Accolade – and the only one released under its alternative publishing label Ballistic – Hardball! claimed to be the first ever 8 megabit sports game (meaning it clocked in at a hefty one megabyte in size). All 26 teams are available to choose from, but with no MLB or MLBPA licence there are no real team nicknames, uniforms or player names. There's also no option to play through a full season or even a playoffs tournament: you can either play a one-off exhibition game or a 'World Series', which is just a best-of-seven game against another team. What it does have, though, is a real umpire: the calls are voiced by then 17-year veteran Eddie Montague. ■

FACT

Fred Savage can be seen playing Hardball! during the first scene in hit 1987 movie *The Princess Bride*. Obviously the Mega Drive version didn't exist then: he's playing the Commodore 64 one.

HARDBALL III

Year 1993
Publisher Accolade
Developer Mindspan Technologies

THE SECOND HARDBALL game was only released on home computers, which meant by the time Hardball III made it to the Mega Drive a lot had changed. The removal of the exclamation mark in the title suggested (probably accidentally) that this was serious business now, as there's far more on offer this time. Most notable is the introduction of league play: you can play either a short 13-game league or a full 162-game season, and everything is saved on the game's battery back-up. The team and player names are still fake, but you can at least edit every single aspect of your team in league mode: from the player names and all their stats to even the logo (with a pixel-by-pixel editor) and uniform. ■

FACT

HardBall III also included play-by-play commentary by Al Michaels, the Emmy-winning sportscaster who at the time had been at ABC Sports for nearly two decades.

HARDBALL '94

Year 1994
Publisher Sport Accolade
Developer Mindspan Technologies

HARDBALL '94 (OR Hardball 4 as it was known on PC) finally includes something its predecessors didn't have: an MLBPA licence giving them access to 700 real MLB player names, including digitised colour pictures of each player's face in their stats screens. While it still doesn't have the MLB licence – meaning no real team logos – it does recreate all 28 ballparks and includes the new 1994 league and division realignment (for the 1994 season both leagues were split from a two-division format into a three-division format). Commentator Al Michaels has been ditched this time, but thankfully the game does still retain the battery back-up option from Hardball III: this not only lets players save their 162-game season, but also keeps track of accumulated stats of every player in the league. ■

FACT

The 1994 MLB season was scrapped early due to a players' strike. Spare a thought for the Montreal Expos, who were leading and having their best season ever.

HARDBALL '95

Year 1995
Publisher Sport Accolade
Developer Cygnus Multimedia Productions

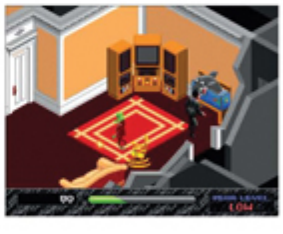
BY THE TIME Hardball reached its fifth instalment, Accolade was mainly focusing its attention on the PC and the shiny new Sony PlayStation. Although both systems got their own snazzy version of what was known as Hardball 5, complete with digitised player sprites, Genesis owners were still treated to an update to Hardball '94. Al Michaels returned from his year off to provide commentary again, and the game was enhanced with more frames of animation to give the batters, pitchers and fielders a smoother look. Other big additions in the '95 edition included the ability to make player trades, variable weather conditions and a bigger 24-meg card designed to save all player stats, standings, trades and any highlights the player saved. ■

FACT

The last Hardball game was Hardball 6, released on the PC in 1998, PlayStation a few months later (as Hardball '99) and then PC again in a final 2000 Edition.

HAUNTING STARRING POLTERGUY

Year 1993
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Electronic Arts



POLTERGUY WAS A fun-loving teen (presumably not named Polterguy) who died one day in an accident involving a faulty skateboard. Now that he's a ghost, he only has one goal in life – well, death – to haunt Vito Sardini, the greedy businessman who owned the badly-run skateboard factory. Sardini and his family own four houses, so it's up to Polterguy to make their lives a living hell by haunting them and driving them out of each house. He can do this by possessing various household objects and using them to freak out any Sardinis who happen to be close by: making a shark leap out of their fish tank, making their bed grow huge teeth, making slime pour out of the sink and so on. ■

FACT

The manual opens with biographies of the game's developers. Apparently co-designer Dave Ralston was known to utter the lovely phrase: 'Another punch/kick game? I think I'm gonna blow chow.'

HEAVY NOVA

Year 1992
Publisher Micronet
Developer Holonet

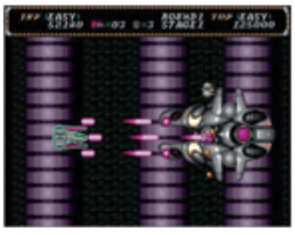
IN THE EARLY twenty-first century, world peace was declared in order to stop the Earth destroying itself. It was too late, though, and the heavily polluted environment made Earth's fate seem inevitable, until an alien race called the Akirovians arrived and made everything clean again. Turns out this was just a sneaky way to take over the planet, though – it's the plot to TV mini-series *V*, basically – so Earth's leaders form a new army to save the day. This army uses special mechs called Heavy DOLLs (Defensive Offensive Lethal Liberators), but they're so awkward to control that the world may as well be doomed. Heavy Nova consists of side-scrolling sections and one-on-one fighting sections, both of which are plagued by poor controls and hit detection. ■

FACT

A Mega CD version of Heavy Nova was released in Japan. It's pretty much the same game, except it now has a CD soundtrack with a catchy Japanese ballad (lyrics and all) on the title screen.

HELLFIRE

Year 1990
Publisher Seismic / Sega
Developer NCS



HELLFIRE IS A shoot 'em up set in the oddly specific year of 2998, where the Galactic Federation has discovered that an evil force called Super Mech is sweeping across the galaxy, capturing planets as it goes. The only way to stop Super Mech is with Hellfire, a powerful ship piloted by the fearless Lancer. At first glance this appears to be a relatively straightforward shoot 'em up but it does benefit from one unique feature: your ship can fire in four different directions. Pressing the B button toggles between shooting forwards, shooting backwards, shooting up and down or shooting diagonally in all four directions. The enemies have been placed with this mechanic in mind: bosses have awkwardly placed weak spots that sometimes require you to fly above or behind them to hit. ■

FACT

The original arcade version's developer was Toaplan, best known for vertical shooters. According to creator Tatsuya Uemura, it was a struggle to create because the team wasn't used to making terrain an obstacle.

HELP!

Year 1993
Publisher inDin
Developer Various

AT THE UK games market's annual industry dinner, an alliance was formed between Sega, Acclaim and US Gold. The trio agreed to take some of their most popular games and put them all together in an extremely affordable Mega Drive compilation in order to raise money for UK charities like Childline and the Prince's Trust. The compilation, called Help!, included five games – Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, Krusty's Fun House, Sonic the Hedgehog, Space Harrier II and WWF Super WrestleMania – all for the price of a single game, £49.99. 10,000 copies of Help! were produced and they were all sold exclusively in UK retailer Dixons, with at least £420,000 raised for charity when all was said and done. ■

FACT

The annual InDin events were organised by the Entertainment Software Charity in the UK. The ESC's operations were taken over in 2008 by newly formed charity GamesAid, which continues raising money to this day.

HELP! 2

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Various

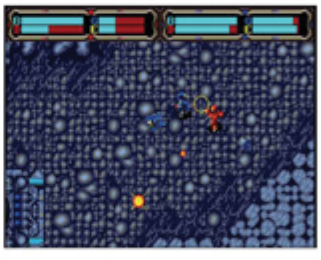
THE FIRST HELP! compilation was such a success that a second one was a bit of a no-brainer. This time the publishers joining forces were Acclaim, Data East, Electronic Arts and Virgin Interactive, each contributing one game to the pack. This four-game bundle once again cost £49.99, with gamers being treated to such delights as Captain America and the Avengers, RoboCop Versus the Terminator, Shaq Fu and WWF Raw (it seems Acclaim just loved selling wrestling games for charity). Woolworths took over distribution duties for this one instead of Dixons, and once again the money raised went to a number of children's charities in the UK including the Prince's Trust. Both Help! bundles included normal, fully boxed games in a slipcase, so they're tricky to find complete. ■

FACT

A third Help! compilation was released for the PlayStation in 1996, and was a three-disc package including Myst, Road Rash and Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars.

HERZOG ZWEI

Year 1989
Publisher Sega
Developer Technosoft



IF YOU KNOW your German you'd be able to guess that Herzog Zwei is the sequel to Herzog, a late '80s real-time strategy game that was released in Japan and considered to be the first proper example of the genre. You play as a high commander rebelling against the dictatorial tyranny of Herzog Eins. Whereas most subsequent RTS games have you controlling the action with a mouse pointer or cursor, Herzog Zwei instead puts you in control of a transforming vehicle that can turn into an attack jet, air transportation or infantry soldier at the touch of a button. The aim is to dominate each of the game's eight different battle stages by buying weapons and troops, placing them on the game map, issuing them commands and ultimately capturing your enemy's bases. ■

FACT

The best way to play Herzog Zwei at the time of writing is the Sega Ages release on Switch. It includes a great 'Herzog Academy' tutorial which helps teach you how to play.

HIGH SEAS HAVOC

Year 1993
Publisher Data East / Codemasters
Developer Data East

KNOWN SIMPLY AS Havoc in Europe (though it says Capt'n Havoc on the title screen), this platformer puts you in control of the titular Havoc, a cheery pirate who happens to be a seal. Havoc is looking for a hidden treasure chest that contains a magical gem called Emeralda which lets its owner rule the world. The problem is the map leading to this chest has been stolen by the nasty Bernard the Blackhearted. Cue 13 levels of swashbuckling shenanigans as you fight your way to Bernard's fort via the likes of a burning village, a chilly mountain and a frozen palace. Havoc is old-school because he defeats enemies by jumping on their heads, though he has a (fairly limited) spin attack should the need arise. ■

FACT

High Seas Havoc has a fun take on the Sound Test option seen in many games. It's called Orchestra and shows Havoc conducting a 13-piece orchestra, who play each tune from the game.

HIT THE ICE

Year 1993
Publisher Taito
Developer Aisystem Tokyo

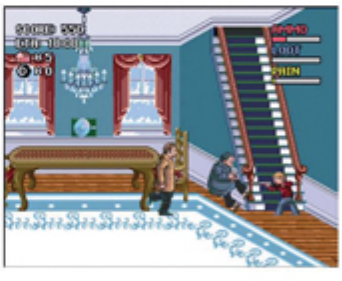
WHEN IT LANDED in arcades in 1990, Hit the Ice was one of the early examples of arcade games offering rules-free, comically aggressive takes on pro sports (ice hockey, in this case). Players can take part in an exhibition match or enter a league and take on a series of teams, all while taking advantage of the rather lax rules regarding violent conduct. While the SNES version's six teams are based on cities like Toronto, New York and Chicago, the Genesis version's eight teams are instead named after the colour of their jerseys: the Reds, Blues, Pinks and so on (they seemingly ran out of ideas when they got to the Sky Blues). The Genesis game also chooses to make each player nameless, rather than giving them comedy names as in other versions. ■

FACT

An NES version of Hit the Ice was fully completed but never released. It included a quest mode, which acted more like an RPG and had you wandering around a town.

HOME ALONE

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Brian A Rice, Inc



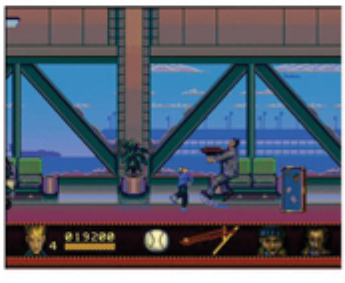
JOHN HUGHES'S MUCH-LOVED Christmas family comedy was the subject of six licensed video games, each on a different platform and each playing completely differently. The Mega Drive version, generally considered one of the weaker offerings, has you playing as Macaulay Culkin's character Kevin McAllister as he tries to prevent bungling burglar duo the Wet Bandits from breaking into houses on his street. Five different homes have been targeted by the Wet Bandits, so Kevin has to use his sled (on flat ground, apparently) to travel between each of them and protect them by setting traps and confronting his two nemeses. Kevin has to collect items and combine them to make new traps, using them to keep the Wet Bandits busy for 20 minutes until the cops arrive to arrest them. ■

FACT

UK magazine *Sega Power* gave Home Alone a scathing review score of 18 per cent, stating disbelief that Sega sent the review copy in a parcel that also contained Sonic 2.

HOME ALONE 2: LOST IN NEW YORK

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega



SEGA DECIDED TO develop the second Home Alone game internally, but for whatever reason didn't see fit to release it in Europe. As in the movie sequel, Kevin has arrived in New York after accidentally getting on the wrong plane. With the rest of his family in Florida and the Wet Bandits coincidentally arriving in New York too after a stint in jail, Kevin has to run and jump his way through eight levels (including the airport, the streets, Duncan's Toy Chest, Kevin's uncle's abandoned apartment and Central Park) while avoiding being caught. Although he can attack enemies with small weapons, he can also build bigger, more powerful ones (like a slingshot or an ice cream cannon) by collecting flashing weapon parts on each stage. ■

FACT

In the second stage you can get bonus points for finding Kevin's mother's handbag, which makes no sense since she's in Florida.

HOOK

Year 1993
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Ukiyotei / Core Design

IF YOU'RE READING this book cover-to-cover it may have struck you just how many movie tie-ins were more than a little underwhelming (often due to being rushed to completion in time for the movie's cinema release). Hook – which, coincidentally arrived later than the film's 1991 debut – was part of the rare breed of movie games that were actually critically praised. Playing as the adult version of Peter Pan (by which I mean he's older, nothing seedy), you have to explore Neverland armed with your golden sword and rescue your children from Captain Hook. Peter can fly, but only when Tinkerbell tops up his flight meter, and if you take enough hits to run out of hearts you'll turn back into regular old Peter Banning again. ■

FACT

There's a scene in the Hook movie where Peter and his children are on a flight. The voice of the pilot saying 'this is your captain speaking' is Dustin Hoffman, who plays Captain Hook.

THE HUMANS

Year 1992
Publisher GameTek
Developer Imagitec Design

THE HUGE SUCCESS of DMA Design's Lemmings led to a number of imitators, including this interesting take on the concept. Instead of giving commands to a bunch of rodents, in The Humans you're instead in control of a group of cavemen. Rather than assigning them roles with a cursor, here you control them directly with the D-Pad, switching between their abilities with the C button and using the B button to perform them. Abilities include picking up objects, standing with their arms up (so that other Humans can climb up them to make towers), using spears as pole vaults or weapons, using a rope to descend high drops or pick up other Humans, and riding a wheel like a unicycle. There are 80 levels in total. ■

FACT

The manual has an FAQ section giving more information on the Humans. Apparently they 'protect themselves from drought, famine, plague, storms, typhoons, floods and tidal waves' by praying.

HURRICANES

Year 1994
Publisher US Gold
Developer Arc Developments

LET'S FACE IT, a console's library can never be truly considered complete until it gets a game based on an animated football series co-created by Scottish Television. Players can choose between four different Hurricanes players in this action platform game: American team captain Cal Casey, Jamaican smart-arse Rude Marley, speedy Japanese midfielder Stats Hiro and the team's 16-year-old owner Amanda Carey (who was the manager's assistant in the cartoon rather than a player, but there you go). The game is a side-scrolling platformer where you use your ball as a weapon (similar to Soccer Kid and Marko's Magic Football). The aim is to reach the island of Garkos in time to attend a charity match against their rivals, the Garkos Gorgons (though you don't get to play the match itself). ■

FACT

Amanda does actually play in the show's first episode: when the Hurricanes are plagued by injuries she disguises herself as a man to play. The team wins but she confesses and they lose to the Gorgons.

IMG INTERNATIONAL TOUR TENNIS

Year 1994
Publisher EA Sports
Developer High Score Productions

EA SPORTS' FIRST take on tennis brought with it an official partnership with IMG, the New York based global sports and talent management company. It included 32 playable men's tennis pros from the past and present, including the likes of Ivan Lendl, Bjorn Borg, Pat Rafter and Tommy Haas. A Tour mode let you play your way through 16 international tournaments covering grass, clay, hardcourt and indoor surfaces, and there was an option to play with up to four players using EA's 4 Way Play multitap. The game also included a series of tips from legendary tennis coach Vic Braden, designed to help players improve their skills. Possibly best of all, there was also the option to argue with the Chair Umpire if you weren't happy with a certain call. ■

FACT

Braden's advice to coaches: don't list your star players as proof of success. 'Show me your worst kid. Is he learning? Is he having fun? Is he getting better? That makes you the best coach I've ever seen.'

THE IMMORTAL

Year 1991
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Sandcastle Productions

THE IMMORTAL IS a dark fantasy game played in an isometric viewpoint. Playing as an unnamed wizard, you have to explore the dungeons below the ruins of the ancient city of Erinoch, in search of your master Mordamir and the fountain of youth. Along the way you'll encounter a variety of creatures, most commonly goblins who you can fight one-on-one using a rudimentary 'duck then attack' combat system. The game's biggest talking point, though, is the number of gruesome ways your wizard can die, from the giant worm who appears out of the ground and swallows you alive in literally the first screen, to the wizard who appears during your final battle with a dragon and casts a spell that makes your head explode in a shower of gore. ■

FACT

The Immortal's designer, Will Harvey, was best known for creating the Music Construction Set, a successful 1984 program that let users create a musical composition then print it out as sheet music.

THE INCREDIBLE CRASH TEST DUMMIES

Year 1994
Publisher Flying Edge
Developer Gray Matter

THESE DAYS THE idea of an action figure line that joked about car crashes would be abruptly pulled from shelves, but in the early '90s the Incredible Crash Test Dummies handled that very topic (including a figure of a baby in a car seat, astoundingly). The video game tie-in was slightly less controversial: it's a fairly run-of-the-mill action platformer in which the protagonist Slick has to rescue his creator Dr Zub from the clutches of Junkman, a particularly nasty dummy who wants to get hold of the doctor's indestructible TORSO-9000 body. As he progresses through the game's 16 stages, Slick will lose limbs every time he takes a hit, but he can regain them by collecting screwdrivers, giving him a leg up on his enemies. ■

FACT

The original line of Crash Dummies figures was based on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's dummies, but networks started banning its PSAs thinking they were toy ads. They were replaced by Slick and Spin.

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

Year 1994
Publisher US Gold
Developer Probe Software

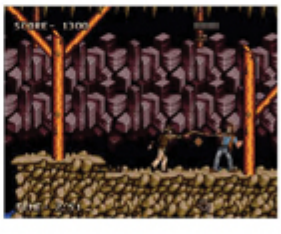
ARE THERE MANY superheroes better suited to video games than Hulk? When your sole purpose in life is to wreck things, that's quite the tempting proposition to gamers. Despite that, this Mega Drive action platformer is oddly restrained when it comes to carnage, but that's not to say you don't get the odd opportunity to toss things around. Hulk has to defeat four of his arch-rivals – Rhino, Absorbing Man, Abomination and Tyrannus – on the way to the secret forest fortress of the evil Leader, who's decided that Earth should be conquered by someone with a high intellect. As you take on the game's five levels you'll get the ability to transform to regular old Bruce Banner, who is extremely vulnerable but small enough to reach hidden areas. ■

FACT

The manual opens with a six-page comic strip called *Revenge of the Leader*, telling the story of the game. It was written by Chris Cooper, Marvel's first openly gay writer and a pioneer of LGBTQ stories in comics.

INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE

Year 1992
Publisher US Gold
Developer Tiertex



WHEN THE THIRD Indy film was released in 1989 two separate games launched alongside it. These were given subtitles to distinguish them: The Graphic Adventure (a point-and-click by LucasArts) and The Action Game (a platformer by US Gold). This 1992 release is a port of the latter, complete with 'The Action Game' still on the box. It's a platformer consisting of five stages: a cave in Utah (where you must find the Cross of Coronado), an escape across a circus train, the catacombs of Venice, the Nazi-infested Castle Brunwald and the final trials to find the Holy Grail. The game is notorious for its difficulty, mainly due to tight time limits and the fact that anything minor hurts Indy, from bumping his head off the ceiling to standing in ankle-high water. ■

FACT

In the movie Indy steps on the letters IEHOVA, crosses the invisible bridge then has to choose which cup is the Holy Grail. The game's final stage follows exactly the same process.

INSECTOR X

Year 1990
Publisher Sage's Creation
Developer HOT-B

IF YOU'VE EVER wondered what bees get up to in their spare time, Insector X may have the answer. It tells the story of two micro-tribes, the Belzers and the Insectors: the former are nasty sods (led by the terribly named Baglon-Belzeid) consisting of creatures who are half insect, half machine, while the latter have practically all been wiped out except for one survivor, Kait, who managed to escape to a desert and was kept safe by a young boy. The Belzers have now tracked Kait down, though, so to protect the boy he flies off to take them all on. The result is a fairly straightforward shoot 'em up taking place over five levels, where all the ships have been replaced by insects. ■

FACT

Oddly, the original arcade version of Insector X, which launched a year earlier, has a completely different art style. Although both games play identically, the arcade game has a far cuter design.

INSTRUMENTS OF CHAOS STARRING YOUNG INDIANA JONES

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Brian A Rice, Inc

ALTHOUGH SEEMINGLY BASED on the short-lived TV series *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* (the chap on the cover looks very much like lead actor Sean Patrick Flanery), Instruments of Chaos is a platform game with a completely original story in which young Indy, serving as a spy during the back half of the First World War, has to travel across the world to stop various German agents getting their hands on different tools needed to build a doomsday machine: a flamethrower in London, a bomb in Bombay (appropriately), mustard gas in Tibet and a Gatling gun in Cairo. Once these have all been prevented the final stage is in Berlin, where Indy has to destroy a prototype Zeppelin. ■

FACT

The TV series was cancelled before the second season ended, meaning the final four episodes set in Florence, Prague, Palestine and Transylvania never aired.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY

Year 1993
Publisher Domark
Developer Tiertex

GIVEN THAT AMERICANS care about rugby about as much as they care about building pyramids (i.e. not at all), it's somewhat unsurprising that Domark's International Rugby was only released in Europe and Australia. This 16-bit take on rugby borrows a lot from Super Kick-Off – which had previously been ported to the Mega Drive by Tiertex – in that it opts for a similarly fast pace and a familiar top-down perspective. Players can either take part in a friendly match, a World Cup or a Five Nations: this was before Italy joined and made it the Six Nations in 2000. The controls have been made simple to match the fast pace: the A and C buttons pass to the left and right side, while the B button kicks the ball. ■

FACT

The Amiga version, known as International Rugby Challenge, didn't fare quite so well as the Mega Drive one: UK magazine *Amiga Power* gave it a score of 2 per cent.

INTERNATIONAL SENSIBLE SOCCER

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Sensible Software

INTERNATIONAL SENSIBLE SOCCER is less a proper sequel to the 1993 Mega Drive port of Sensible Soccer and more of an update designed to take advantage of World Cup USA '94. Whereas the previous version included 40 international teams, this new release instead featured 51, along with the ability to take part in a 'World Championship' tournament that looks suspiciously World Cup-esque. The same 64 club teams and competitions are still present, but there's one other large difference: all the team and player names are now completely accurate: no more Highbury vs Manchester or Glaswegian vs Glasgow, now it's Arsenal vs Manchester United and Celtic vs Rangers with all the correct rosters intact. These changes essentially make its predecessor obsolete. ■

FACT

Other ports of the International edition featured an on-screen referee for the first time but the Mega Drive one doesn't: yellow and red cards still just appear menacingly over players' heads.

INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR SOCCER DELUXE

Year 1996
Publisher Konami
Developer Factor 5

INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR SOCCER (ISS) launched on the SNES in 1995 before receiving a Deluxe update in early 1996. This shinier version eventually ended up on the Mega Drive by the end of the same year, courtesy of Factor 5. There are 36 international teams to choose from and players can take part in a friendly, 'International' mode (a cup tournament with group stages) and 'World Series' mode (which is a league format). There's also a Scenario mode where you're given 12 situations that happened in real life and asked to turn them around to win the match. Like its predecessor and its Nintendo 64 sequels, ISS Deluxe received great praise for delicately walking the balance between fast-paced arcade style football and tight, satisfying controls. ■

FACT

Scenario mode's wording can be blunt. The final one has England drawing 1-1 with Japan and says: 'Unbelievably, ENGLAND conceded a goal to a country from ASIA. It will be just as losing if the game ends in a tie.'

ISHIDO: THE WAY OF STONES

Year 1990
Publisher Accolade
Developer Accolade

'WHAT DO NINJA masters do in their spare time?' So asks the cover of Ishido, one of Accolade's first Genesis games. It's a solitaire-style puzzle game where the player has to place 72 stones onto a board of 96 squares, but has to follow a set of specific rules: each new stone has to be placed next to an existing one and must be either the same colour or show the same symbol (or both, if it touches multiple stones). While the game itself is a reasonable puzzler it was more infamous for being a major part of Sega v Accolade, the copyright lawsuit where Sega claimed that Accolade had illegally reverse-engineered its console's copy protection to make unlicensed cartridges. The decision ultimately went Accolade's way. ■

FACT

As well as a standard manual Ishido also comes with a 32-page book called *The Way of Stones*, which is full of all sorts of mythology about the game's tiles. Full points for effort, lads.

IZZY'S QUEST FOR THE OLYMPIC RINGS

Year 1995
Publisher US Gold
Developer Alexandria

REMEMBER IZZY? YOU know, the bizarre morphing mascot of the 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympics, shaped like a tear because presumably his creator already started to regret designing him while still drawing him? Well, this was a platform game starring said terrible mascot. The 'eternal flame' used to light the torch at the opening ceremony has gone missing, so Izzy has to save the day. The problem is, Izzy doesn't live in our reality: he lives in a magical universe called the Torch World, so he needs to collect all five Olympic Rings in order to open the Reality Vortex and enter the human world to light the torch. It sounds like something else was being lit up while this story was being written, if you ask me. ■

FACT

An animated special called Izzy's *Quest for Olympic Gold* aired on TNT and Cartoon Network. It only aired a handful of times and has never been re-released or even posted online since.

JACK NICKLAUS' POWER CHALLENGE GOLF

Year 1993
Publisher Accolade
Developer Microsmiths

ACCOLADE (AND LATER Activision) released a series of six different home computer golf games bearing Jack Nicklaus's name in the eleven years between 1988 and 1999. Power Challenge Golf is a console port of the third game in the series, Jack Nicklaus Golf & Course Design: Signature Edition. Despite the name of the source material there's no actual course design elements here: that fairly important element was removed but an extra third course was added to make up for it: as well as English Turn Country Club and Sherwood Country Club, players could now also play on Baltusrol, where the 1993 US Open took place. Nicklaus appears before each of the 54 holes to give advice, but the sluggish nature of the game makes it an exercise in patience. ■

FACT

The sixth and final game in the series was Jack Nicklaus 6: Golden Bear Challenge on PC. Golden Bear is his nickname, so sadly, the game isn't actually about playing a wild animal at golf.

JAMES BOND 007: THE DUEL

Year 1993
Publisher Domark
Developer Domark

DESPITE USING THE likeness of Timothy Dalton, this action platformer isn't based on any specific Bond movie and is instead an original story. A mad scientist called Professor Gravemar has hijacked a satellite launch centre in a Caribbean island, and plans to launch a bunch of satellites to take over the world. It's up to good old Jimmy Bond to stop him, but before he can get to the professor he needs to rescue a bunch of hostages who have been tied up in various locations (a ship, a jungle, a volcano, the launch facility itself), arm bombs in each location and escape before they detonate. Handily, the professor also has a cloning machine, meaning Bond will face clones of old enemies like Jaws, Oddjob, Baron Samedi and Mayday. ■

FACT

The Japanese version is called 007 Shitō. That isn't a comment on the quality of the game, it roughly translates as 'fight to the death'. Or a Duel, I suppose.

JAMES 'BUSTER' DOUGLAS KNOCK OUT BOXING

Year 1990
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

FINAL BLOW WAS a boxing game released in arcades by Taito in 1988. When it was ported to the Mega Drive in Japan a couple of years later it went by the same name, but by the time Sega was ready to release it in the west it had secured the licensing rights to James 'Buster' Douglas, the heavyweight underdog who became an overnight success when he beat the then-undefeated Mike Tyson. The game didn't excite people quite like Douglas vs Tyson did, however: there are only five boxers to choose from including Douglas himself (he replaces the Detroit Kid from the Japanese version), and fights are fairly mindless, sluggish affairs. Fight your way through them all and you'll face off against Ironhead, a mysterious boxer wearing a luchador mask. ■

FACT

Rumour has it that Sega licensed Douglas purely because Nintendo had Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!! on the NES and Sega wanted to say it had the guy who beat him.

JAMES POND: UNDERWATER AGENT

Year 1991
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Millennium Interactive

THE EVIL DR Maybe (who's clearly not quite as committed as Dr No) has taken over the Acme Oil Company and is polluting the oceans with toxic waste, among other heinous crimes. There's only one fish up to the job and the name's Pond, James Pond, Agent Double Bubble Seven. James has to complete 12 missions, each of which has a codename that's a terrible pun on a Bond movie. A View to a Spill, for example, has you blowing up an oil platform by collecting dynamite, while The Mermaid Who Loved Me tasks you with finding magic combs and giving them to trapped mermaids so they can gain the strength they need to overcome the polluted water and escape with James. ■

FACT

A Kickstarter campaign launched in 2013 to try to fund a new James Pond game. The campaign was criticised as being too vague and ended early after raising only 16 per cent of its goal.

JAMES POND II: CODENAME: ROBOCOD

Year 1991
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Millennium Interactive

ALTHOUGH THE FIRST James Pond game was the one that introduced everyone to the slippery secret agent, the vast majority of gamers from that era associate him with the second, far more popular title instead. After the Acme Oil Company was destroyed, Dr Maybe escaped and sought refuge in the North Pole, eventually deciding that while he's there he may as well imprison Santa Claus and take over his workshop. James has to make his way through Santa's massive toy factory, taking out enemies and rescuing penguin hostages. The Robocod name refers to James's new robotic suit: not only can he hide inside it to protect him from enemies and drop onto them from above, it can also extend and let him stretch to reach higher power-ups and ledges. ■

FACT

There's a famous cheat right at the start of the game: if you collect the cake, hammer, Earth, apple and tap collectibles (in that order), you'll spell out CHEAT and become invincible.

JAMES POND 3: OPERATION STARFISH

Year 1993
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Millennium Interactive

THE THIRD AND final (proper) James Pond game does a *Moonraker* and sends James into space to face off against Dr Maybe and defeat him once and for all. This time the mad doctor has set up a series of cheese mines on the moon in order to mine the finest quality moon cheese and monopolise the cheese markets on Earth. James's mission is to destroy the mines, rescue his fellow agents who are being held captive and finally put an end to Dr Maybe's nonsense. This time his main gimmick is his special moon boots: these have tremendous grip and let James run up extremely steep slopes. Along the way he'll also come across a number of gadgets like spring boots, an umbrella (to slow his fall) and a jet thruster. ■

FACT

There was actually a fourth game called James Pond in the Deathly Shallows, which was quietly launched on mobile devices in 2011. It was roundly panned as terrible.

JAMMIT

Year 1994
Publisher Virgin Interactive
Developer GTE ImagiTrek

AT FIRST GLANCE Jammit looks like one of the numerous NBA Jam clones to emerge following the success of Midway's classic, but while it does have its similarities – most notably its use of digitised character sprites – it does play differently, offering a series of 1-on-1 contests instead of 2-on-2 action. There are three different characters to choose from, with the other two becoming your opponents: Chill specialises in blocking shots and dunking, Roxy is best at long shots and can jump highest, and Slade is the fastest player with the highest stamina. There are seven different game variations: win all seven of them and you'll reach the final match against Judge, an overpowered boss character who can play like nobody's business. ■

FACT

Jammit was also released on the 3DO. Despite the greatly improved power of this CD-based console, the game didn't look much better than its 16-bit siblings.

JENNIFER CAPRIATI TENNIS

Year 1992
Publisher Sega / Renovation Products
Developer System Sacom

IN 1992, THE big name in tennis was 16-year-old Jennifer Capriati. After winning the Canadian Open singles tournament and the Italian Open doubles tournament in 1991 then winning gold at the 1992 Olympics, it was safe to say she was the best possible face for this Mega Drive tennis game. Capriati is the only real player in the 24-strong roster here: each of the other 11 women and 12 men are fictional but have names suspiciously close to real-life players (Baker, Argus, Supras, Sellers and Sapatie are almost certainly Becker, Agassi, Sampras, Seles and Sabatini). As well as one-off exhibition matches you can take part in a Circuits mode, where you try to become the 1993 champion by winning the Sydney, Paris, London and Florida Opens. ■

FACT

The European version of the game is called GrandSlam: The Tennis Tournament. While this implies it doesn't have Capriati in it, she's actually still there.

JEOPARDY!

Year 1993
Publisher GameTek
Developer Park Place Productions

THE SYNDICATED GAME show *Jeopardy!* is something of an American institution, which is why it's found its way onto numerous video game systems over the years. Much like the SNES, the Genesis received three different editions of the game, the first of which launched in early 1993 and boasted digitised images of the actual set as well as authentic music, sound effects and the voice of host Alex Trebek. There are 3,500 questions in the game spread over 700 categories: these range from fairly straightforward (Twentieth Century Personalities, American History, Literary Classics) to a little more offbeat (Presidential Middle Names, Singers' Autobiographies, Imaginary Islands). As in the real show, there are three rounds: Jeopardy!, Double Jeopardy! and Final Jeopardy!, where it can all change in an instant. ■

FACT

Here's a depressing sample question: 'Unable to make money on his patent for vulcanized rubber, he died $200,000 in debt.' Answer: 'Who is Charles Goodyear?'

JEOPARDY! DELUXE EDITION

Year 1993
Publisher GameTek
Developer Park Place Productions

RELEASED LATER IN the same year as the first Jeopardy! game, the Deluxe Edition has something of a cheeky title. Although it may imply some sort of fancier, more impressive experience than the first game, the reality is that Jeopardy! Deluxe Edition is identical to its predecessor. The only difference is that (thankfully) all the questions have been replaced with a completely new batch of 3,500. Example categories this time include the likes of The Circus, Poetry and Starts With 'Me', and as in the previous game players have to type in their answers using an on-screen keyboard (there's some leeway for bad spelling). The only other change is the avatars you choose from to represent you, which consist of new people. ■

FACT

A sample question from the Starts With 'Me' category: 'Siena college basketball games were once closed to the public due to this disease.' Answer: 'What are measles?'

JEOPARDY! SPORTS EDITION

Year 1993
Publisher GameTek
Developer Park Place Productions

DON'T KNOW ANYTHING about American history? No interest at all in books or music? More of a sports fan, you say? Well, you're in luck: Jeopardy! Sports Edition is once again an exact copy of the first Jeopardy! game, except this time the new helping of 3,500 questions focuses solely on sports trivia. No longer will you be asked who the thirteenth US President was (it was Fillmore), instead you'll be delving into such categories as Embarrassing Moments, Football Colors and Endorsements (so if you knew that Babe Ruth was the first to endorse Jockey shorts, you're in luck). New avatars are here too, consisting of a bunch of grinning goons in sports equipment, because everyone knows you have to dress like a tennis player to answer questions about tennis. ■

FACT

A sample question: 'This NFL team went 1-15-0 in 1980.' Answer: 'Who are the New Orleans Saints?' How times have changed.

JERRY GLANVILLE'S PIGSKIN FOOTBRAWL

Year 1993
Publisher RazorSoft
Developer Developer Resources

KNOWN IN ARCADES as Pigskin 621 AD, this wacky medieval take on American football was bizarrely renamed on the Genesis to add an endorsement by actual serious Atlanta Falcons head coach Jerry Glanville. The game (which plays more like rugby than American football) pits two teams against each other on a field littered with debris and dangerous obstacles, such as holes, bushes and rocks, and tasks them with carrying a ball to their endzone to score points. There are no real rules, though, meaning you can happily run over and give an opposing player the beating of his life in order to not only get the ball back, but maybe even hurt him enough to incapacitate him for the rest of the match. ■

FACT

In case you're wondering what Glanville has to do with the game: not much. He appears in a small corner of the title screen and has a few soundbites, and that's about it.

JEWEL MASTER

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Cube

WHEN THE BRILLIANTLY-NAMED demon king Jardine the Mad invaded the peaceful kingdom of Mythgard, chaos ensued until the Twelve Masters of the Elements tried to stop him. Eight were killed, but the remaining four extracted their powers into a special sword called the Holy Blade, which you – an unnamed hero – must now find and use to defeat Jardine once and for all. Along the way you can find magical rings that give you special powers: these can be placed on your left and right hands and give you a variety of fire, water, wind and earth-based powers. To make things more interesting, you can put two rings on each hand: this lets you combine their powers for unique combination spells. ■

FACT

According to the sound test option, some of the game's tracks share the same name as songs by UK rock band Yes (including 'To Be Over', 'Close to the Edge' and 'The Gate of Delirium').

JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER

Year 1994
Publisher Virgin Interactive
Developer Archer Maclean

ALTHOUGH THERE WERE a decent number of pool games in the 16-bit era, snooker games were far less common (presumably because there's very little interest in it in North America). One major exception to this is Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker, which began life in 1991 on home computers and was later ported fairly accurately to the Mega Drive. This ambitious game (which took developer Archer MacLean years to program) opts for a polygonal graphical style, allowing players to rotate and zoom the camera as they see fit. MacLean also added a couple of fun little quirks to give the game a personality: spend too long taking your shot and one of the balls may come to life and blow you a raspberry.

FACT

Jimmy White himself appeared on British TV show GamesMaster for a unique challenge in which he attempted to clear a real-life table of balls before the game could do the same. He won.

JOE & MAC

Year 1994
Publisher Takara
Developer Elite / Eden Entertainment

JOE AND MAC are a couple of fun-loving 'cave-dudes' who like nothing more than heading into the mountains to party and drink. After one particularly entertaining session, though, the pair arrive home to discover that a group of Neanderthals have kidnapped all the town's women. Off they head, then, to rescue the cavegirls in an accurate rendition of Data East's 1991 arcade platformer. Whereas the SNES version of the game has a new world map unique to it, the Mega Drive one is more of a straight port of the arcade game: there are 15 stages in total but you only play 11 of them in any playthrough (there are a few moments where you choose which route to take). It's perhaps best known for its large dinosaur bosses.

FACT

The Japanese version opens with a cutscene showing the Neanderthals dragging the women out of their huts by the hair. This was removed in the western version.

JOE MONTANA FOOTBALL

Year 1990
Publisher Sega
Developer Park Place Productions

ASK SOMEONE IN 1990 to name an American football player and Joe Montana would have likely been the first name out of their mouths. With four Super Bowl rings to his name and MVP awards in 1989 and 1990, there was no better player to join Sega's roster of sports games named after star athletes. If the game looks similar to EA's John Madden Football, there's actually a strange reason for that: Sega worked with EA to develop it, with the latter sourcing Park Place Productions (who had developed Madden) to essentially make EA's own competitor. This may go some way to explaining why Joe Montana Football was a somewhat inferior game: with only 16 teams to choose from and a limited playbook, it was fun but it was no Madden.

FACT

In 2019, Montana was one of ten quarterbacks named in the NFL's 100th Anniversary All-Time Team alongside the likes of John Elway, Brett Favre and Tom 'Deflategate' Brady.

JOE MONTANA II: SPORTS TALK FOOTBALL

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer BlueSky Software

IT WAS CLEAR that having EA handle both its own American football game and its competition wasn't going to work in the long run so Sega handed development duties of its second Joe Montana game to BlueSky Software. The result was a wildly different game that ditched the vertically scrolling viewpoint and went with a side-on view more similar to a TV broadcast (including a nifty zoom effect during runs). The biggest new feature, however, is hinted at in the title: full play-by-play commentary by 49ers announcer Lon Simmons. While it's very basic by today's standards, the way the game patched together various samples from Simmons to give a running commentary on the action was incredibly impressive at the time.

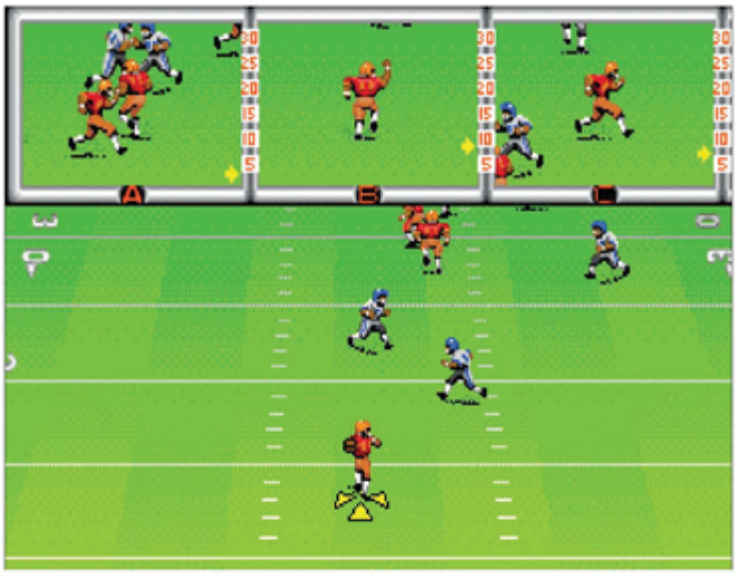
FACT

Oddly, some other Sega game titles work as valid passwords. The likes of GOLDENAXE2, MOONWALKER and SHINOBIIII (Shinobi III) drop you in seemingly random league situations.

JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL

Year 1990
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Park Place Productions

IT SAYS A lot about the impact Madden made on the Mega Drive that many fans of the franchise believe this was the first game in the series. In reality, the first John Madden Football was a 1988 Apple II game which later came to the PC and C64, but there can be no denying that it was Madden's Sega debut that properly kicked things off. As with so many other American football games of its era, the first Madden doesn't do anything particularly remarkable on paper: there are 16 teams to choose from (plus an All-Madden dream team), you can play either an exhibition match or a play-off tournament, and there are no team nicknames, logos or player names. Where it truly comes into its own, then, is the way the game actually looks, plays and feels. The vertical viewpoint was fairly uncommon for American football games at the time (most went for a side-scrolling view), but its impact was clear: not only did looking at the action from over your players' shoulders better drive home the feeling of making progress as you fought your way up the field yard by yard, it also made passing more natural as you saw your receivers run up the screen and find space (before you brought up the game's innovative three-screen passing window). Its influence on the American football games that came after it was clear, and the fact that it even gained some popularity in traditionally NFL-indifferent Europe due to its ease of use speaks volumes. ■



FACT

Due to hardware limitations, the original Apple II version of Madden was only going to have teams with six or seven players in them, until John Madden said he would refuse to endorse a game that wasn't authentic.

JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL 92

Year 1991
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Park Place Productions

IF THE FIRST Mega Drive Madden was memorable for the impact it made, Madden 92 was just as iconic because it kicked off EA's trend of yearly annual releases of its major sports franchises.

A number of improvements were made, most notably the inclusion of all 28 NFL teams rather than just the best 16 (though, again, still with no real team or player names). Other additions included an instant replay feature so you can watch your big touchdown passes again, the option to review pass interference calls, a wider selection of plays to choose from and even player injuries, which result in a comical moment where a giant ambulance drives onto the field, running over anyone in its way. ■

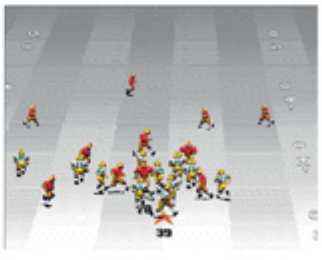
FACT

The game comes with an 80-page manual that explains the rules of American football, lists every play in the game and gives the full player stats for all 28 teams.

JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL 93

Year 1992
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Looking Glass Technology

THE THIRD MADDEN game looked similar to its predecessor but offered a number of new features designed to breathe new life into the game. Madden provides limited 'commentary', which is essentially just a few one-liners here and there (though the cover cheekily says it's 'commentary you'll never turn off', a likely dig at Joe Montana II). As well as once again including all 28 teams from the 1992–93 season, Madden 93 also includes classic teams for the first time ever: there are eight 'greatest ever' teams from NFL history, including the likes of Oakland '76, San Francisco '84 and New York '86. It also ditches passwords for a battery back-up save, and includes the no huddle offence and the ability to stop the clock by spiking the ball. ■



FACT

In case you were the sort who took their Madden 93 seriously, the game comes with a double-sided poster that shows diagrams of all 59 offensive and 70 defensive plays.

JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL: CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION

Year 1992
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Looking Glass Studios

JUST BEFORE EA finally secured the NFL licence (which is why the series continues elsewhere in this book under 'Madden NFL'), it released this special version of John Madden Football 93 which wasn't available for sale and was strictly exclusive to rental stores. The Championship Edition is identical to Madden 93 in terms of the game's look and feel, but there are no modern teams in it at all. Instead, the game contains 38 classic championship teams from as far back as 1966, letting players put them head-to-head to see which team was the greatest of all time. So if you've always wanted to know who would win in a game between the 1969 Minnesota Vikings and the 1987 Denver Broncos, your oddly specific dream can finally be realised. ■

FACT

Because this game was exclusive to rental stores and was only made available during ex-rental sales, it can be difficult to find a boxed copy that isn't damaged or covered in Blockbuster stickers.

JORDAN VS BIRD: ONE ON ONE

Year 1992
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Electronic Arts

FEW MEN (IF any) dominated the NBA in the '80s and '90s as much as Larry Bird and Michael Jordan respectively. Given that the two were like chalk and cheese in terms of their playing style, a video game pitting them against each other was an interesting prospect. Jordan vs Bird consists of three different modes, designed to make the most of their individual strengths. The Slam Dunk Contest lets players control Jordan as he chooses from a selection of ten different dunks, which are judged on their execution. The 3-Point Shootout, meanwhile, lets Bird take over and show off his incredible accuracy from behind the three-point line. Finally, the One-on-One mode puts both players on the court together as they compete to outscore one another. ■

FACT

Bird was the NBA's league MVP three times and played in their All-Star Game 12 times. Jordan, meanwhile, was NBA MVP five times and played in the All-Star Game 14 times.

JOSHUA & THE BATTLE OF JERICHO

Year 1994
Publisher Wisdom Tree
Developer Wisdom Tree

A YEAR AFTER it released Exodus: Journey to the Promised Land, religious developer Wisdom Tree made a sequel that played almost identically. Whereas Exodus had you playing as Moses, this time you're playing as Joshua, the leader of Israel, as he plans to pillage the city of Jericho. Not that this in any way resembles what's going on in this game which, like Exodus, is a Boulderdash clone in which players take on 100 levels as they try to 'fulfil the Lord's object quota' by collecting enough brass, silver and gold to make the exit appear. Joshua can blow his trumpet to fire musical notes at enemies, and after each stage you'll be asked five questions about the Book of Joshua, just in case you're secretly a heathen. ■

FACT

The main enemies are the Hittites, who lived where Turkey is now at around 1600 BC. If Joshua hits them with musical notes from his trumpet they'll get angry. I would too, to be fair.

JUDGE DREDD

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Probe Entertainment

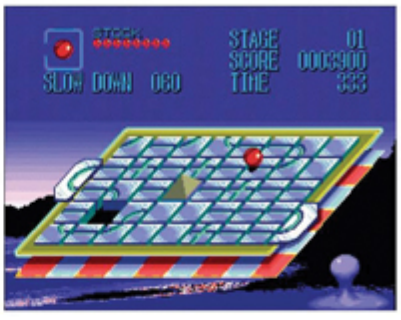
IN 1995, SYLVESTER Stallone starred in a controversial movie version of the popular 2000 AD comic strip *Judge Dredd*. Fans and critics alike would end up dismissing the film as ambitious but ultimately terrible, most notably because Stallone broke the series' cardinal rule by having Dredd remove his helmet. The video game rendition was developed by Probe Software and shared many elements from its much-loved SNES version of Alien 3. As in the movie, Dredd has to track down his corrupt brother Judge Rico Dredd, culminating in a fight atop the Statue of Liberty. The game has an extra five stages beyond the events of the film, though, in which Dredd takes on a few other missions before travelling to the Dark Judges' dimension to defeat them. ■

FACT

Stallone has said that he regretted not making the movie more fun. 'We shouldn't have tried to make it Hamlet,' he told *Uncut* magazine, 'it's more Hamlet and Eggs'.

JUNCTION

Year 1991
Publisher Micronet
Developer Micronet



IN 1982 KONAMI released an arcade puzzle game called Loco-Motion. Then, in 1990, it released a similar one called Cue Brick. Neither was ported to the Mega Drive, but the concept was at least licensed to Micronet, who turned it into Junction. It's sort of a cross between sliding puzzle games and Pipe Mania / Pipe Dream: a red ball moves slowly along a grid, following the path that's laid in front of it. As it does, the player can slide each of the grid's tiles around in order to change the path and redirect the ball. The aim is to guide the ball through a series of checkpoints dotted around each stage. If you can do this before running out of time or causing the ball to stop, you've cleared the stage. ■

FACT

This wasn't Sega's first dealing with the Junction concept: it published Konami's Loco-Motion arcade game in Japan in 1982.

THE JUNGLE BOOK

Year 1994
Publisher Virgin Interactive
Developer Eurocom

THE JUNGLE BOOK is based on Disney's classic movie of the same name and has players taking control of young man-cub Mowgli as he makes his way through 10 stages roughly following the events of the movie. Some levels require Mowgli to collect a certain number of items and then meet a character from the film in order to proceed, whereas others are more conventional and end with a boss fight instead. The game was praised for the high quality of its animation: this was mainly because work originally began on the game by David Perry and other members of the development team behind the likes of Cool Spot and Aladdin. Before the game was finished, though, they left to form Shiny Entertainment and Eurocom took over. ■

FACT

By pausing and inputting button commands that spell out BAD LAD BULL CRAB, RUB A BALL and RAD CRAB RADAR LAB, secret developer love messages for 'Eve', 'Mand' and 'Kath' respectively are revealed.

JUNGLE STRIKE

Year 1993
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer High Score Productions

THE SEQUEL TO Desert Strike moves the action from the deserts of the Persian Gulf to the jungles of South America, where Ibn Kilbaba – the son of the dictator you killed in the first game – has teamed up with a South American drug lord called Carlos Ortega to take down the United States with nuclear weapons. After you defend Washington DC from terrorists in the first stage, the majority of the game then moves to the jungles before returning to Washington for a final battle. The main addition to Jungle Strike is the ability to take control of different vehicles. Instead of merely flying an attack helicopter, some missions now have you controlling a motorbike, a hovercraft and an F-117 stealth jet. ■

FACT

As mentioned above, the first level in Jungle Strike takes place in an urban setting. Fittingly, the first level of the next game, Urban Strike, takes place in a jungle setting.

JURASSIC PARK

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer BlueSky Software

PRACTICALLY EVERY CONSOLE in 1993 got its own bespoke Jurassic Park video game. The Mega Drive one was unique in that it allowed players to play as either Dr Alan Grant or a Velociraptor, each with their own separate storyline. Grant has to use his tranquilisers and various other weapons to reach the Visitor Centre where he can escape by helicopter, whereas the Raptor has to slash and munch its way through other dinosaurs and security guards in order to reach the Visitor Centre and have Grant for supper. The game suffers from more than its fair share of slow down and the clunky controls take a little while to get used to but the novelty of being able to play as a dinosaur made Jurassic Park a memorable game nonetheless. ■

FACT

The map of Isla Nublar in the game has a small mountain range shaped like a genie's lamp. This is a reference to BlueSky's unfinished Aladdin game, which was scrapped so that Virgin Games could make one instead.

JURASSIC PARK: RAMPAGE EDITION

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer BlueSky Software

ALTHOUGH THE NAME suggests an enhanced update, Jurassic Park: Rampage Edition is actually a completely standalone sequel. Once again players get to play as Alan Grant or the Raptor, but this time Grant is trying to stop InGen agents from airlifting eggs and DNA samples off the island while the Raptor is trying to gather its eggs and escape the island on a departing cargo ship. The Rampage Edition tag is more than just a sales pitch, as both characters are enhanced with new abilities to ensure a more action-packed game. Grant is now armed with unlimited tranquiliser darts, whereas the Raptor has the ability to enter a Raptor Rage mode, where it turns invincible for a while and can cause even more carnage than it usually can. ■

FACT

Both characters' stories end with their boat sailing away as the island burns, so I suppose you could say that humans and dinosaurs aren't so different after all. Other than the whole eating people thing, of course.

JUSTICE LEAGUE TASK FORCE

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim / Sunsoft
Developer Condor

THE EVIL SUPERVILLAIN Darkseid has destroyed a military base – a clear sign that he intends to take over the Earth – so it's up to the Justice League to figure out what's going on. After choosing one of six different Justice League members (Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Green Arrow, The Flash or Aquaman), you have to first fight your way through the other five members (who it turns out are evil android clones created by Darkseid) before facing off against Cheetah and Despero for more information on Darkseid's whereabouts. This one-on-one fighting game differs a little from the SNES version in terms of art style and general feel, because whereas Condor developed the Mega Drive game the SNES one was instead handled by Blizzard. ■

FACT

Interestingly, although Condor and Blizzard were completely separate companies, Blizzard would ultimately buy Condor.

KA-GE-KI: FISTS OF STEEL

Year 1991
Publisher Sage's Creation
Developer HOT-B

THIS ODD FIGHTING game has you playing as Kei, an honourable young fighter. After Kei refuses to become the right-hand man of crime boss Kageki, his brother is beaten up and hospitalised by Kageki's gang. As Kei, you have to fight your way up to the top of Kageki's tower, which consists of nine floors, until you reach the top and face off against the man himself. Each floor is home to one of Kageki's henchmen, many of whom have odd names like Ashpit, Lizard and Weirdo. Combat consists of two punches, a quick jab and a powerful but slow straight. Do enough damage and you'll knock your opponent down, prompting a referee to start a 10-count. They may be criminals, but at least they respect rules. ■

FACT

In the original arcade version of Ka-Ge-Ki, other gang members stood in the background watching your fight. They aren't in the Genesis version but you can still hear their cheers.

KAWASAKI SUPERBIKE CHALLENGE

Year 1994
Publisher Time Warner Interactive / Domark
Developer Lankhor

IN BETWEEN F1 and F1 World Championship Edition, Domark released this spin-off in which the Formula One cars are replaced by motorbikes. Known simply as Kawasaki Superbikes in Europe (because nothing's a challenge for us Europeans), the game looks similar to F1 but the handling is noticeably different, requiring you to turn far earlier into corners. There are 15 tracks to choose from based on real life circuits, as well as an eight-hour endurance race set in Japan's Suzuka circuit. Much like F1, it uses polygonal scenery, which is visually impressive but leads to a low frame rate. It also includes the turbo mode from F1, which reduces the size of the scenery in order to improve the frame rate slightly. ■

FACT

The specific bike model in the game is the Kawasaki ZXR750R. It was made in 1991 and has a top speed of 159.3 mph, which I'm reliably informed was quite good at the time.

KICK OFF 3: EUROPEAN CHALLENGE

Year 1994
Publisher Vic Tokai
Developer Anco

DINO DINO'S KICK Off series was well known for its top down viewpoint and its complicated but rewarding control scheme. The third Kick Off game, however, had no input from Dini whatsoever and as a result was a very different game, ditching its overhead perspective for a side-on view and replacing the trademark loose ball controls with a ball that more or less stuck to players' feet.

Players can take part in a number of European club or national tournaments, and also have the option to take part in full English, French, Italian, Spanish or German leagues. According to a preview in UK magazine *Mean Machines Sega*, Newcastle manager Kevin Keegan was consulted for advice on where players should stand during free kicks and corner kicks, which seems unnecessary. ■

FACT

Dino Dini had left Anco after the release of Kick Off 2 (Super Kick Off on the Mega Drive) and moved to Virgin Games. Dino Dini's Soccer, found elsewhere in this book, is considered the 'true' Kick Off 3.

KID CHAMELEON

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

WILD SIDE IS a new arcade game where players step into a room filled with holograms. It's maybe a bit too realistic, though, because the game's boss Heady Metal has started capturing children and keeping them locked inside the game world forever. It's up to Kid Chameleon to step into Wild Side, defeat Heady Metal and rescue all the trapped gamers. As well as the typical platforming staple that is jumping on enemies' heads, Kid Chameleon can also collect nine different masks: these transform him into other characters and give him various power ups. A hockey mask makes him look like Jason from the *Friday the 13th* movies and lets him throw machetes at enemies, for example, while a Samurai mask arms him with a katana sword. ■

FACT

Kid Chameleon can be completed surprisingly quickly thanks to a crazy hidden warp at the end of the second stage, which teleports you directly to the final boss.

KING OF THE MONSTERS

Year 1993
Publisher Takara / Sega
Developer SPS

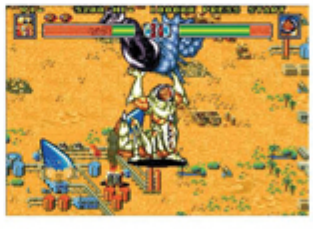
IF YOU'VE EVER wanted to be a giant monster in a Japanese 'kaiju' movie, King of the Monsters should be right up your alley. There are four giant monsters to choose from: the Godzilla-like lizard beast Geon, the brilliantly named giant cockroach Beetle Mania, an enormous stone golem called Rocky and an oversized superhero named Astro Guy. The aim of the game is simply to cause huge damage to your opponent by punching them, throwing them around and performing your special projectile attacks on them, until they're worn down enough to be pinned to the floor for three seconds. Chances are you'll have caused untold damage and destruction to the city around you, but there are always unavoidable casualties when ruddy big monsters have a scrap. ■

FACT

King of the Monsters was originally a Neo Game. Two of the characters from that version – a big gorilla called Woo and a slime monster called Poison Ghost – were cut from the Mega Drive game.

KING OF THE MONSTERS 2

Year 1994
Publisher Takara
Developer Betop



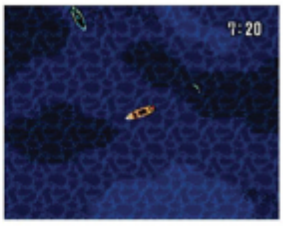
KING OF THE Monsters' silly premise was popular enough to earn a sequel, although this time the Mega Drive port differs greatly from the main Neo Geo game. Whereas that version has you actually trying to save the world, this time by choosing one of three enhanced monsters – Super Geon, Cyber Woo or Atomic Guy – and playing through a series of side scrolling stages taking on alien invaders, the Mega Drive version remains a standard one-on-one fighting game similar to the first King of the Monsters. This time, though, you get to choose between nine different monsters, including many of the aforementioned alien enemies: these include an odd squid-shaped thing called Eifflelyte and a horrible big bug thing with a toothy, vertical mouth called Aqua Slug. ■

FACT

The original Neo Geo arcade versions of both King of the Monsters games are available on the Nintendo Switch eShop, as part of Hamster's Arcade Archives collection.

KING SALMON: THE BIG CATCH

Year 1992
Publisher Vic Tokai
Developer HOT-B



SADLY NOT A fantasy role playing game in which you play as the underwater ruler of a kingdom of fish people, but another one of HOT-B's fishing simulators. The aim here is to take part in the Salmon Derby and land the biggest king salmon in order to take home a trophy. You do this by trolling (as in towing a lure behind your boat, not harassing the salmon online). You start off at local tournaments held around Vancouver Island and work your way up to the World Record Challenge, where your goal is to catch a 100lb king salmon to make the record books. You aren't the only boat in the water though, so you have to make sure not to bump into the other competitors. ■

FACT

The king salmon, better known as the Chinook salmon, is the largest species of Pacific salmon. You can tell where one came from by analysing its ear bone, which records the chemical composition of the water it lived in.

KING'S BOUNTY: THE CONQUEROR'S QUEST

Year 1991
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer New World Computing

BEFORE DESIGNER JON Van Canegham created the Heroes of Might and Magic series, he designed this RPG. The evil Arech Dragonbreath, leader of the Dark Legions, has stolen the Sceptre of Chaos from King Maximus and used it to create chaos across the land. As one of four characters – Sir Crimsaun the Knight, Lord Palmer the Paladin, the Sorceress Tynnestra, Mad Moham the Barbarian – you have to recover the Sceptre by finding all 25 pieces of a map showing its location. Seventeen of these pieces lie with key villains, whereas the other eight have been hidden alongside artefacts. The locations of the Sceptre and map pieces are randomised each game, so no cheating once you know where it is. ■

FACT

The PC version of King's Bounty plays very differently to this one, most notably because its exploration was turn-based (allowing you to avoid enemies easier) instead of real-time.

KLAX

Year 1990
Publisher Tengen
Developer Tengen

RELEASED ON PRACTICALLY every system known to man, Klax is a simple but deceptively challenging puzzle game. Coloured tiles slide towards you on a conveyor belt and your job is to catch them in a small tray and deposit them in the 5x5 playing area below you. By stacking up blocks to match the colours vertically, horizontally or diagonally you will clear them: this is known as a Klax. The aim is to fulfil each level's goal by clearing certain numbers of types of Klax in order to proceed to the next. If things get too much you can chuck pieces back up the conveyor belt, but this runs the risk of having to catch multiple tiles at once, making you more likely to drop some and lose the game. ■

FACT

The Japanese Mega Drive version of Klax was a completely different port developed by Namco. Although it lacks the customisation options of the Tengen version, it does feature two-player co-op.

KRUSTY'S SUPER FUN HOUSE

Year 1992
Publisher Flying Edge
Developer Audiogenic

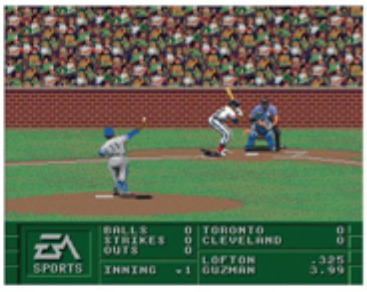
KRUSTY THE CLOWN is in trouble: his funhouse has been invaded by rats and if he doesn't get rid of them soon Krustyland could be shut down. He's enlisted the help of some of his friends to try and kill the rats with elaborate traps so, playing as Krusty, it's your job to guide the vermin to the traps so they can be popped, zapped and sliced accordingly. There are five worlds in total, each containing a number of stages and each with their own unique trap operated by Bart, Homer, Sideshow Mel, Corporal Punishment and… um, Bart again (because why not?). The game is essentially Lemmings in reverse, where you're trying to guide small rodents to their death rather than their freedom. ■

FACT

'Warning kids,' the manual states. 'Do not try this at home. We do not advocate cruelty to real animals, only their cartoon equivalents.' Which is good, because I was starting to worry.

LA RUSSA BASEBALL 95

Year 1994
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Stormfront Studios



THE SEQUEL TO Tony La Russa Baseball (spoiler: it's coming up later in this book), La Russa Baseball 95 contains all the official 1994 MLBPA rosters and all 28 teams. Although the lack of an official MLB license means the team nicknames and logos aren't present, the game does still recreate six real-life ballparks, and while they aren't given their official names they're clearly supposed to be the likes of Wrigley Field, Camden Yards and Fenway Park. If you aren't happy with the teams available, there are also two custom team slots, where you can draft your favorite players from the entire league to create your own dream team. If you're lazy, the default teams already have the best players statistically. ■

FACT

Stormfront Studios' team leader Don Daglow certainly knew his stuff: while at Pomona College in 1971 he created the first ever playable baseball video game on the school's mainframe computer.

LAKERS VS CELTICS AND THE NBA PLAYOFFS

Year 1990
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Electronic Arts

THE FIRST GAME in EA's NBA Playoffs series (which would eventually become the NBA Live series) focuses on the 1990 NBA Playoffs and only includes the final eight teams that took part in them. Well, sort of. Since the game is also about the rivalry between the Boston Celtics and the Los Angeles Lakers, and since the New York Knicks knocked the Celtics out before they reached the final eight, this game dumps the Knicks and reinstates the Celtics. As EA's first officially licensed NBA game all the player names, team names and logos are correct. EA also included all-star teams from both the Eastern and Western Conferences to get around the problem of making sure star players who didn't make the playoffs were still included. ■

FACT

If you have a European PAL version of the game, you could be rich. The NBA licence for Europe fell through at the last minute so EA pulled the game. 192 copies made it to shelves, but at the time of writing only 13 are accounted for.

LANDSTALKER: THE TREASURES OF KING NOLE

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Climax Entertainment

NOT ENOUGH VIDEO game heroes are called Nigel, if you ask me. Landstalker's protagonist is blessed with such a name, though. He's a treasure hunter by trade and as he's collecting a fee for a job one day, a fairy called Friday appears and asks him to help her hide from a bunch of thieves. It soon emerges that Friday knows the location of the legendary treasure of King Nole, so Nigel and Friday decide to team up and find the booty. This isometric action-adventure game may not have any specific features that make it truly unique compared to others, but everything is handled to such a degree of quality that it remains critically acclaimed to this day and is regularly featured in Sega's modern retro compilations. ■

FACT

The Japanese version is considerably naughtier, and certain items – including a bunny girl outfit, a porn magazine and a g-string – were replaced by far more mundane objects.

LAST ACTION HERO

Year 1993
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Bits Corporation

LAST ACTION HERO may not immediately roll off the tongue when listing the greatest movies Arnold Schwarzenegger ever made, but at least it still got a video game adaptation: take that, *Jingle All the Way*. It's a side-scrolling action platformer where you play as Arnie's character Jack Slater – a movie star who's found himself in the real world – as he punches his way through an endless sea of identical bad guys wearing white t-shirts. Occasionally the action will switch to a racing stage, where you drive Slater's car through traffic, but for the most part it's hand-to-hand combat on offer here until you finally reach the cinema and jump back through the screen into the movie world. Incidentally, the music is terrible. ■

FACT

Schwarzenegger tried to persuade the film's co-producers to delay it by a month so it didn't launch a week after *Jurassic Park*. They refused, *Jurassic Park* did gangbusters and *Last Action Hero* suffered in its shadow.

LAST BATTLE

Year 1989
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

THIS LAUNCH TITLE was originally released in Japan as a licensed game based on popular manga *Hokuto no Ken* (Fist of the North Star), but its licence was removed in the west – presumably due to a lack of awareness of the IP – and it was instead given the more arbitrary title Last Battle. In the western version players take control of Aarzak, a martial artist who has to defeat the evil Garokk and save his female companion Alyssa in the process. The game is a side scroller where players have a limited moveset: Aarzak can jump, kick and punch, and not much else. As he defeats a succession of enemies. Aarzak's power gauge can grow. This beefs him up and makes his attacks more powerful. ■

FACT

This wasn't actually the first time this happened. Last Battle is actually a sequel to another Fist of the North Star game, which was localised for the Master System as Black Belt.

THE LAWNMOWER MAN

Year 1994
Publisher Time Warner Interactive
Developer Teque London

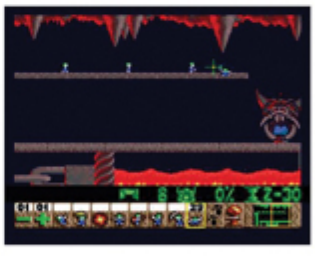
ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO be named The Lawnmower Man 2, this tie-in is actually set after the events of the New Line film (this was a couple of years before an actual sequel movie was released). Dr Angelo and Carla (Pierce Brosnan and Rosalee Mayeux) have to break into the labs of Virtual Space Industries and use their VR systems to enter cyberspace and confront Joel, the now superhuman test subject who controls the worldwide computer network and threatens to destroy the world. Translated to video game form, this means – you guessed it – an action platformer, where you play as either Dr Angelo or Carla. That said, it does also have some 'virtual reality' sections, where you race through polygonal landscapes in a first-person perspective. ■

FACT

A second Lawnmower Man game called Cyberwar launched on PC, Mac and (in Japan) PlayStation in 1994. This strange interactive movie was also planned for the Mega CD and 32X but both versions were scrapped.

LEMMINGS

Year 1992
Publisher Sunsoft / Sega
Developer Sunsoft



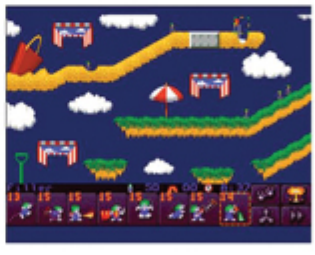
ALTHOUGH IT WAS ported onto practically every system around at the time, the Mega Drive version of Lemmings is arguably the most complete because it contains more levels than any other. If you're unfamiliar with the game the aim is to guide a group of mindless Lemmings – who can only walk forwards – to an exit by equipping them with various skills: climbing, floating, blocking, building, bashing, mining, digging and blowing up. Whereas most versions of Lemmings contain 120 levels grouped into Fun, Tricky, Taxing and Mayhem difficulties, the Mega Drive version adds 30 more stages in a category called Present, as well as a further 30 extremely difficult ones in a category named Sunsoft: these are believed to be even harder than the Mayhem levels. ■

FACT

Level 18 in the Sunsoft levels is a stage shaped like characters from Sunsoft's Hebereke series. This marks their only appearance on the Mega Drive.

LEMMINGS 2: THE TRIBES

Year 1994
Publisher Psygnosis
Developer Digital Developments / Krisalis



IT'S ESTIMATED THAT Lemmings sold around 20 million copies, so obviously a sequel was on the cards. Lemmings 2 mixes things up a bit by introducing 12 separate Lemming tribes – Classic, Polar, Space, Outdoor, Beach, Cavelem, Medieval, Egyptian, Sports, Shadow, Circus and Highland – and gives each of them their own unique set of skills (from a pool of 51). Each tribe has 10 levels, giving the game 120 in total. While the larger number of abilities gives a far greater range of puzzles to solve, it does complicate things too and it could be argued that some of the simplicity that made the original so well-loved – everyone knew how the eight main skills worked before – is lost in the process. ■

FACT

A British synth-pop outfit called SFX released a dance track called 'Lemmings' to tie in with Lemmings 2's release. It entered the UK charts at number 51 and sounds as good as you'd expect.

LETHAL ENFORCERS

Year 1993
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

A GAME THAT maybe wouldn't go down too well in this day and age, Lethal Enforcers has you playing as a Chicago cop out to clean up the streets by shooting first and asking questions later. To be fair, practically all of the enemies in this light gun shooter approach you with their weapons already drawn, so the question of shooting innocent people is practically non-existent as you play through all five stages (including a bank, Chinatown, an airport, the docks and a chemical plant). The game came bundled with the Justifier, Konami's own light gun controller. It's designed to look like a Colt Python, but is made of bright blue plastic so there's no way it could be confused for the real thing. ■

FACT

Despite what I just said, Lethal Enforcers was part of the 1993 Congressional hearings on violent video games, with Senator Joe Lierberman claiming the Justifier looked too much like a real gun.

LETHAL ENFORCERS II: GUN FIGHTERS

Year 1994
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

LETHAL ENFORCERS' DIGITISED shooting shenanigans were popular enough to encourage Konami to release a sequel. This time instead of taking place in a modern day setting, Gun Fighters is set in the year 1873 and you're a sheriff in the Wild West tasked with getting rid of the various desperados and outlaws ruining things for the local townsfolk. As before there are five stages, this time covering a bank robbery, a horseback hold up, a showdown in a saloon, a train robbery and finally a trip to the villains' hideout. Like the first game it supports the Justifier light gun, although because it was never sold separately anyone who wanted to use it would need to have already bought the first game. ■

FACT

The third Lethal Enforcers game didn't arrive in arcades until 2004. It used polygonal graphics rather than digitised sprites, and let players pull up a shield by pointing their gun off-screen.

LHX ATTACK CHOPPER

Year 1992
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Electronic Arts

THIS AMBITIOUS POLYGONAL port of a PC game lets players take control of either an LHX (Light Helicopter Experimental) chopper or a McDonnell Douglas AH-64A Apache. Although its missions are generally randomised, they take place over three distinct locations – Libya, Vietnam and Central Europe – and tend to have you gunning down various tanks, aircraft and surface-to-air missile systems in the name of the red, white and blue. America, that is, not France. The manual makes it clear that LHX isn't making any political statements, and that it 'merely seeks to explore and solve the tactical and strategic problems presented by the terrain, weaponry and personnel of certain nations, were a conventional war to occur between America and these "potential" adversaries.' If you say so, manual. ■

FACT

This was one of three Mega Drive games under the EA Air Force brand. This short-lived attempt to group together its flight games EA Sports style included F-22 Interceptor and Desert Strike before it was ditched.

LIBERTY OR DEATH

Year 1994
Publisher Koei
Developer Koei

AS YOU CAN probably tell by reading this book, Koei has more than its fair share of historical simulation games, where players take turns to build a nation and succeed in battle. Liberty or Death is no different, only this time it tells the story of the American Revolutionary War. Players can choose to either step into the boots of George Washington and control the American Continental Army, or instead play as Thomas Gage and command the British army, although given that it wasn't released in Europe I'd imagine most went for the former option. Indeed the back of the box acts like Washington is the only playable character and the purpose of the game is simply to destroy the British Navy. ■

FACT

If you're playing as Britain you have to take control of all 53 of the game's districts to win. If playing as America, you can still win if you just hold on until 1820, at which point King George III 'goes insane'.

LIGHT CRUSADER

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Treasure

ONE OF THE lesser-known games developed by Treasure, Light Crusader is an isometric action RPG where you play as David Lander, a swordsman who is summoned by King Weeden and asked to investigate why the townspeople of the land of Green Row have been disappearing. It soon emerges that the Green Row graveyard is host to a secret passageway that leads to a massive underground dungeon complex where all the poor townsfolk are being imprisoned. Off you trudge through said dungeons, rescuing the villagers while trying to find Ragno Roke, the evil wizard responsible for the deed. Light Crusader's magic system is particularly unique: you can collect element capsules (Fire, Earth, Air and Water) and combine them to make 15 different spells. ■

FACT

The Australian version of Light Crusader was released in the same size of box used for VHS tapes, for no known reason.

THE LION KING

Year 1994
Publisher Virgin Interactive
Developer Westwood Studios

THE VIDEO GAME version of Disney's immensely popular 1994 animated movie lets players guide Simba through the entire events of the film, starting off as a young cub in the Pridelands and making his way through 10 stages until he's an adult fighting against Scar to avenge his fallen father. Along the way you'll experience a multicoloured, animal-filled stage based on the 'Can't Wait to be King' musical number, fight hyenas in the elephant graveyard and avoid a wildebeest stampede (which is presented in a pseudo-3D view as Simba runs towards the screen). When Simba is young he can only perform a weak roll attack, but once he's an adult he can maul and flip enemies over. Given the movie's obvious appeal to children the game is notoriously difficult. ■

FACT

According to Westwood co-founder Louis Castle, the monkey enemies who throw nuts at Simba were originally 'obviously throwing something else but [Disney] made us take that out. It was like, oh come on, kids love poo jokes.'

THE LOST VIKINGS

Year 1994
Publisher Interplay / Virgin Games
Developer Silicon & Synapse

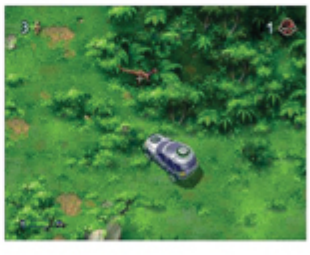
WHEN AN ALIEN called Tomator decides to create an intergalactic zoo he decides that it wouldn't be complete without humans, so he flies to Earth and abducts three Vikings: Erik the Swift, Baleog the Fierce and Olaf the Stout. It's up to the trio to work together to escape Tomator's spaceship and get back home. Each character has their own unique abilities: Erik can jump and run fast, Baleog has a sword and a bow and arrow that let him attack enemies and hit out-of-reach switches, while Olaf has a shield that can protect him and his friends from projectiles and lets him float safety down from high drops. Only by combining their abilities can players get through the game's 42 stages (five of which are exclusive to the Mega Drive version). ■

FACT

Silicon & Synapse would eventually become Blizzard. Fittingly, the Lost Vikings made a cameo appearance in World of Warcraft as the 'Lost Dwarves', and could be found in the Uldaman area.

THE LOST WORLD: JURASSIC PARK

Year 1997
Publisher Sega
Developer Appaloosa Interactive



AS WITH THE original Jurassic Park, most consoles were given completely different games to tie in with the second movie. The Mega Drive take isn't a 2D platformer like its first Jurassic Park games, but rather an overheard shooter like the SNES Jurassic Park. Taking place on Isla Sorna, you have to try to capture various species of dinosaur while also taking on a group of greedy poachers who are trying to take some dinos back to the mainland. The game rewards you for stunning dinosaurs with your taser, tranquiliser darts and gas bombs, but if things get too messy you can find a combat shotgun, machine gun, hand grenades and homing missiles to get you out of scrapes. Some sections let you ride jeeps, bikes and rafts. ■

FACT

Not counting compilation cartridges, The Lost World was the last Genesis game published by Sega in North America.

LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE

Year 1992
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Gremlin Graphics

THE ORIGINAL LOTUS Esprit Turbo Challenge was a huge success on home computers like the Commodore Amiga, so EA brought the sequel to the Mega Drive (and removed the '2' from the title to avoid confusion). It's an arcade-style racer consisting of eight themed tracks called Forest, Night, Fog, Snow, Desert, Interstate, Marsh and Storm. Although there are two different cars from UK manufacturer Lotus to race in, you can't choose between them: some tracks put you in control of a yellow Lotus Elan, whereas others put you behind the wheel of a red Lotus Esprit Turbo. As in games like Out Run, each stage is a point-to-point race rather than a circuit with laps, so the aim is simply to reach the end before time runs out. ■

FACT

Since the A and B buttons are used for acceleration and braking respectively, what about C? Well, pressing it makes the game shout 'yeee-hawww', which the manual states is 'useful for annoying friends'.

LOTUS II: R.E.C.S.

Year 1993
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Gremlin Graphics

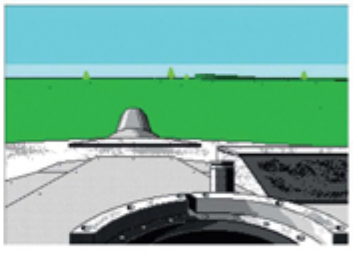
CONTINUING WITH ITS confusing console naming scheme, EA ported Lotus III to the Mega Drive and renamed it Lotus II. As before, the name of the game is speedy arcade-style racing, but this time there's also a Championship mode where you have to keep an eye on a fuel gauge too. There are now three cars to choose from: joining updated 'SE' models of the Elan and Esprit Turbo is the Lotus M200 concept car. The game's big new feature, however, is the R.E.C.S. alluded to in the title. This stands for Race Environment Control System and lets you make your own tracks by choosing various menu options: whether it's a circuit or a point-to-point race, how sharp the bends are, how many hills and obstacles there are etc. ■

FACT

The Lotus M200 was shown off at the Frankfurt Motor Show in 1991, and was notable for having two separate cockpits for the driver and passenger. Only one was ever made.

M-1 ABRAMS BATTLE TANK

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Realtimes Games Software



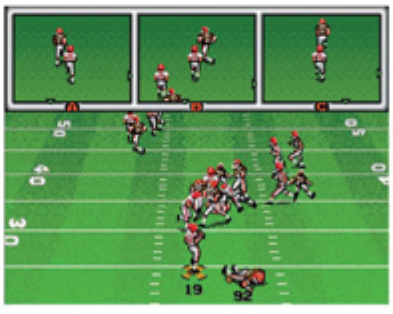
ORIGINALLY RELEASED ON home computers by Electronic Arts in the late '80s, this first-person tank simulator lets players take control of an M1A1 Abrams tank (minus the hyphen in the title, as tank nerds would no doubt point out) as you take part in World War III. Yes, the third one. It turns out Soviet Troops are invading Germany, so you've been assigned to carry out a series of eight missions designed to take out their war machines and force them to retreat. The eight scenarios play out in a random order (though you can practice them at will from the main menu), and you have to make sure you're adept at all four positions: the driver's station, the gunner's station, the tank commander's station and the cupola on top of the tank. ■

FACT

The M1A1 is an upgraded version of the standard M1. It's a few tonnes heavier and its main weapon is a 120mm smoothbore gun (compared to the M1's 105mm rifled gun).

MADDEN NFL 94

Year 1993
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer High Score Productions



AFTER THE FIRST three games in the John Madden Football series (found earlier in this book), EA acquired the official NFL license and the series was renamed Madden NFL. Although the NFLPA license had yet to be acquired – meaning players could still only be identified by their numbers – this at least marked the first time in the series that all official team names and logos were present. This also meant players could take part in an official 16-game NFL season complete with Playoffs and the Super Bowl. As well as all 28 NFL teams from the 1993–94 season, players can also choose from 38 classic Super Bowl teams going back to 1966 and 12 all-time teams going back to the '50s. ■

FACT

This was the first Madden game to adopt the now legendary 'EA Sports: It's in the game' intro animation.

MADDEN NFL 95

Year 1994
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer High Score Productions

FIVE GAMES INTO the series, EA finally acquired both the NFL and NFLPA licenses, meaning for the first time Madden had not only the real NFL team names and logos, but also complete 48-player rosters for all the season 1994–95 teams. Other changes include the removal of passing windows for the first time, meaning all the passing information you need is seen directly on the field itself. John Madden designed 44 new defensive plays for the game, and the field was made larger to give players more space to run. One casualty of the new real-life rosters was the classic teams, which were removed, though by pressing B, A, C, A, C on the set-up screen you could unlock the future NFL expansion teams, the Jacksonville Jaguars and the Carolina Panthers. ■

FACT

To really drive home the addition of real player names, the game came with a large foldout poster containing the full team rosters and ratings for every player in the game.

MADDEN NFL 96

Year 1995
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer High Score Productions

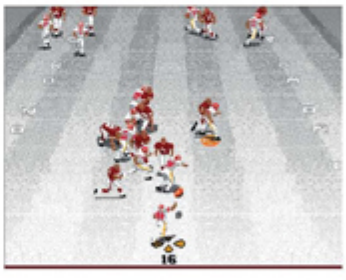
THE 1996 VERSION of Madden gave the series a slight visual overhaul. Players' uniforms now have numbers on the back and team logos appear on the end zones, plus new 3D pre-rendered players give the game a more realistic appearance. The two NFL expansion teams, the Jaguars and the Panthers, are now available as standard and the TV-style presentation is enhanced with the audition of Pat Summerall as an announcer. The main addition, however, is the ability to create your own player and put them through the NFL Combine, which consists of a number of mini-game drills (such as a 40-yard dash, an agility drill and a receiver catching drill). Your performance in these drills affects your player's ratings and when they're called in the NFL Draft. ■

FACT

There are no fewer than 100 hidden teams in the game that can be unlocked with codes. Most are historic teams but they also include World League teams like the Scottish Claymores and London Monarchs.

MADDEN NFL 97

Year 1996
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer High Score Productions



MADDEN 97 WAS the first game in the series to be released on the PlayStation and Saturn so naturally EA's attention was more focused on getting the game right on those newer systems. As a result, the Mega Drive version was more a case of evolution rather than revolution, with most of its additions being quality of life improvements rather than completely new features. These include the new Iso-Cam option, which allows you to choose any player and focus the camera on them rather than the ball. You can also save your favourite plays and watch them again later, and the passing system now lets you choose between up to five receivers by toggling between them with the B button (though this was a tad fiddly). ■

FACT

Madden 97 wasn't originally going to be the first PlayStation game in the series. Visual Concepts (who would go on to make the NFL 2K games) was working on Madden 96 before EA scrapped it.

MADDEN NFL 98

Year 1997
Publisher THQ
Developer High Score Productions

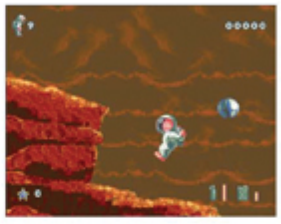
THE EIGHTH AND final Madden game on the Genesis was more or less a token gesture, with EA entirely focused on the CD-based consoles by this point. EA's involvement with this version was so minimal that publishing duties were handed over to THQ instead. Additions to the game this time were minimal, including slightly tweaked AI, the addition of hot and cold streaks affecting team performance, trading deadlines during a season and the option to replay any of the last 10 Super Bowls. Other than the expected updates to uniforms, logos and rosters, Madden 98 was a fairly low key release and a safe way to draw a line under what was arguably the Mega Drive's most popular sports series. ■

FACT

Not only was Madden 98 the last Madden game on the Genesis, it was the last on any Sega system. The Saturn got a version, but come Madden 99, EA had ditched Sega support.

THE MAGIC SCHOOL BUS: SPACE EXPLORATION GAME

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Music Pen



BASED ON THE educational books and animated series of the same name, The Magic School Bus is a well-made edutainment game about exploring each of the planets. Starting with the moon, players have to first fly there in the bus (while taking photos of objects of interest and shooting down asteroids). They then have to land the bus on a landing platform and explore the planet on foot (via a side-scrolling platformer section) to find the teacher Ms Frizzle. Once reunited with her, you then have to put together a shuffle puzzle and a pair-matching exercise before the level is complete. Then it's off to the other planets to repeat the process, albeit with more obstacles in the way. ■

FACT

Although this is the only Magic Schoolbus game on the Genesis, Microsoft made no fewer than 13 of them for the PC.

MALLET LEGEND'S WHAC-A-CRITTER

Year 1993
Publisher Realtec
Developer AV Artisan

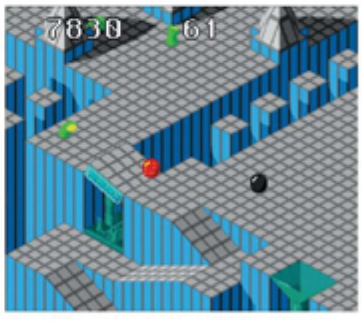
THERE AREN'T MANY unlicensed Genesis games that can claim their own bespoke controller, but that's what Mallet Legend's Whac-a-Critter (simply named Mallet Legend on the title screen) offers. The game itself is an extremely simplistic whack-a-mole imitation where the player, as the noble Prince David, has to rescue Princess Philia by bashing loads of animals on the head for some reason, and is perfectly playable with a standard controller by holding down the direction of the hole you want to aim for and pressing A. However, as the box states, things get 'totally intense with the SMASH controller', a standalone controller (sold separately!) with nine yellow buttons. It only works with this game, and is therefore about as niche as it gets when it comes to peripherals. ■

FACT

The manual states: 'Good luck and bash some skulls!!!' which is a few more exclamation marks than you'd maybe expect for wilful promotion of deliberate concussion.

MARBLE MADNESS

Year 1991
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Mike Schwartz / Steve Hayes



THIS VINTAGE ATARI arcade game was first released in arcades in 1984 and was designed by Marc Cerny (who would go on to become the system architect for the PlayStation 4 and 5). Marble Madness is an isometric maze game where you control a marble and have to get it from the top of a ramp to the goal at the bottom. There are six stages in total with a variety of obstacles and hazards to avoid, including giant worms that try to eat the ball, large vacuum nozzles and acid slime. Because the arcade version was relatively short and this is an accurate port that offers no extra stages, most criticism of the game was that it could be completed fairly quickly. ■

FACT

The Japanese Mega Drive version of Marble Madness is a completely different port, developed by Tengen. It's generally regarded as being more faithful to the arcade original.

MARIO ANDRETTI RACING

Year 1994
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer High Score Productions

A MARIO GAME on the Genesis?! What is this madness? Chill out folks, it's only motorsport legend Mario Andretti lending his name to an EA racing game. Andretti was famous for being a champion in a wide variety of motorsports, so naturally the game doesn't focus on a single style of racing. There are three types to choose from: sprint cars, stock cars or indy cars. Players can either play a single season with one type of car or take part in a career that encompasses all three disciplines. One of the game's more interesting features is Andretti Tips, an in-depth learning tool where Andretti gives you a text commentary as you drive around a course, telling you how to approach each specific corner. ■

FACT

Andretti is the only racer to have ever won the Daytona 500 (in 1967), the Indianapolis 500 (1969) and the Formula One championship (1978).

MARIO LEMIEUX HOCKEY

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Ringler Studios

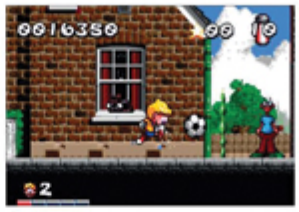
YES THE MEGA Drive actually had two Mario games. This one bears the name of legendary Pittsburgh Penguins centre Mario Lemieux, who at the time had played with them for seven seasons and would stay with them for another 15 before retiring. As one of the earlier ice hockey games on the Mega Drive, these days it doesn't quite live up to the man's name: there are 16 (unlicensed) teams to choose from, and players can take part in either an exhibition match or a knockout tournament consisting of all 16 teams. If you're only there for the action you can also choose to jump straight to a shootout, or even dispense with the hockey nonsense altogether and get stuck into a fight right from the main menu. ■

FACT

A special edition of the game came with a hockey puck with a copy of Lemieux's signature imprinted on it. 100 randomly chosen ones also had his real signature on the back of the puck.

MARKO'S MAGIC FOOTBALL

Year 1994
Publisher Domark
Developer The Cartoon Mavericks



KNOWN SIMPLY AS Marko in North America (presumably to avoid confusion when they notice his football is strangely round rather than egg-shaped), this well-animated platformer tells the story of Marko, a football-obsessed boy who discovers that a nasty toymaker called Colonel Brown plans to turn the world's citizens into a bunch of mutants by exposing them to a dangerous slime. Turns out the slime also makes Mario's football magic, however, so Marko decides to use the Colonel's technology against him and heads out to save the day. Similar to Soccer Kid (which was planned for the Mega Drive but never released), the game involves using your football to hit enemies, destroy cans of sludge and even bounce off it to reach higher areas. ■

FACT

Because its controls can be a little complicated, the Options menu includes an option called Backyard, where you can practice with the ball outside Marko's house and try to hit various floating targets.

MARSUPILAMI

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Marsu

IF YOU'RE WELL versed on your Belgian comics (and who isn't) you'll know that Marsupilami was a species of pet owned by journalists Spirou and Fantasio. This is a different Marsupilami, though, who starred in his own standalone comic series and ultimately ended up getting his own US animated show on CBS. In this Mega Drive adventure, Marsupilami and his elephant pal Bonelli have been captured by the terribly named hunter Bring M Backalive. The game is one big escort mission as you have to escape and guide Bonelli back to the circus, rescuing his three elephant kids along the way. Marsupilami's tail is the key mechanic here: it has various abilities, such as creating a staircase for Bonelli to walk up, and turning into a mouse to scare him into moving. ■

FACT

In the animated series, the elephant was called Stewart instead and was voiced by Dan Castellaneta, better known as the voice of Homer Simpson.

MARVEL LAND

Year 1991
Publisher Namco / Sega
Developer Tose

KNOWN AS TALMIT'S Adventure in Europe, this cheery Namco platformer was originally released in arcades in 1989. It tells the story of the titular Marvel Land, a theme park created to pay tribute now a now-deceased king. The park's four areas – Flower Land, Prairie Land, Sweets Land and Ice Land – were guarded by four fairies, but then the evil King Mole turned up with his army and imprisoned each fairy, taking over Marvel Land. It's up to Prince Talmit, a descendant of the king, to enter Marvel Land and rescue all the fairies. Although Talmit is usually limited to just running and jumping, by finding a Spirit Tail power-up he can project a long whip-like beam from his body and use this to attack enemies and swing from ledges. ■

FACT

At the end of each world you get a 'Star Parade' bonus stage, where you can rack up points while a light display pays tribute to Namco games like Pac-Man, Phelios and The Tower of Druaga.

MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Bits Corporation

THE 1994 FILM adaptation of *Frankenstein*, both directed by and starring Kenneth Branagh, was widely regarded as the most authentic retelling of Mary Shelley's 1818 novel. Although it ultimately perhaps didn't do quite as well as expected (especially considering the success of its companion piece *Bram Stoker's Dracula*), that didn't stop the launch of this platformer tie-in in which players take control of Frankenstein's monster (played in the movie by Robert De Niro) as it makes its way through the streets of Ingolstadt, an underground crypt, woodlands, the Frankenstein mansion and the Arctic before embarking on a Russian ship for a face-off with Frankenstein himself. The monster is armed with a wooden stick, but should the need arise he can fire a blue ball of energy, reducing his health. ■

FACT

Producer Francis Ford Coppola wanted to cut the first half-hour from the movie but Branagh refused, so Coppola publicly stated that he didn't approve of the film.

MASTER OF MONSTERS

Year 1991
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer ISCO / Opera House

THIS IS A port of a 1988 game originally released for Japanese computers by SystemSoft, creators of the detailed military strategy series Daisenryaku. It actually plays similarly to those games, but with a fantasy theme rather than a military one, and as such is one of the more complex turn-based strategy games you'll find on the Genesis. It's a four-player game where each player steps into the role of one of five magicians – a daimyo, a sorcerer, a wizard, a darklord or a summoner – and uses them to take command of an army of monsters. There are 80 different types of monster, ranging from your typical dragons and demons to less conventional ones like unicorns, mermaids and hippogriffins. Which are part griffin, part horse, apparently. ■

FACT

Legend has it that hippogriffins were rare because griffins saw horses as their enemies, so the chances of them mating were very slim. They probably both hated doing it too.

MATH BLASTER: EPISODE 1

Year 1993
Publisher Davidson & Associates
Developer Davidson & Associates

THERE AREN'T MANY 'edutainment' games that remember to include the 'tainment' part, but Math Blaster does a decent job of being an exception as it teaches kids addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Players take control of Blasternaut as he chases the nasty Trash Alien, who's kidnapped his robot buddy Spot. There are three types of stage to play through: Trash Zapper has you solving equations by blasting the correctly numbered piece of garbage out of the sky, Cave Runner is a platformer where you have to carry certain numbers through gaps in order to proceed, and Math Blaster equips you with a jetpack as you solve an equation to fly into the correct numbered porthole to enter the Trash Alien's ship. ■

FACT

The first Math Blaster game launched on the Apple II computer in 1983. There were over 20 Math Blaster titles released for home computers up until the mid 2000s.

MAZIN SAGA: MUTANT FIGHTER

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Dynamic Planning

A BEAT 'EM up based on the *MazinSaga* manga series, which itself was a retelling of the *Mazinger Z* manga and anime series from the '70s. It's set in the year 1999, where the Earth has been invaded by the brilliantly named God Kaiser Hell and his Bio-Beasts, driving humans underground as they hide for cover. Earth seems doomed until Professor Kobuto creates the Mazinger Z, a human-sized organic armour that, when worn by his son Koji, may just be powerful enough to repel the alien scum and defeat God Kaiser Hell. Each stage begins as standard beat 'em up fare, until you eventually come across the boss: these are enormous and have to be held at bay until you can grow to their size and fight them properly. ■

FACT

The *MazinSaga* manga was published in *Weekly Young Jump* magazine from 1990 to 1992, at which point it was discontinued without reaching its conclusion.

MCDONALD'S TREASURE LAND ADVENTURE

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Treasure

RONALD MCDONALD IS happily minding his own business while walking through the Magical Forest, when he sees a piece of paper lying at the bottom of a tree. Deciding to pick it up (as you do), Ronald realises it's a piece of a treasure map. It turns out the other three pieces are in the possession of three Big Baddies, so off Ronald goes to try and get them. There are four main worlds in this platformer developed by Treasure (appropriately enough): Magical Forest, Magical Town, Magical Sea and Magical Moon. It's all very magical, basically. As well as shooting magic at enemies to defeat them, Ronald can also use his scarf – a magical one, of course – to grab onto handles and reach higher areas. ■

FACT

The Japanese game has some pretty stereotypical black tribesman enemies, with grass skirts and offensive facial features. These were replaced with robots in the western version.

MEGA BOMBERMAN

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Westone

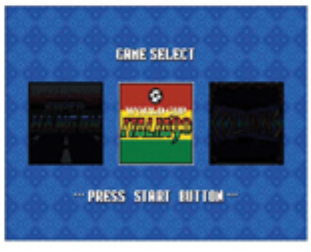
THE BOMBERMAN SERIES was hugely popular on the SNES and TurboGrafx-16, seeing multiple entries on each format, but the Mega Drive only ever received this one: a port of TurboGrafx title Bomberman '94. As with most other games in the series there are two main game modes: a single-player Normal Game where you work your way through six worlds blowing up all the enemies with your bombs, and the famous Battle Game where up to four players take part in a multiplayer deathmatch with the simple aim being to become the last (bomber)man standing. The newest feature in Mega Bomberman is Louies, a bunch of differently coloured kangaroo-type creatures that you can ride on to gain new abilities and take a hit without dying. ■

FACT

Louies are called Rooi in Japan (because they're based on kangaroos). It's assumed that the interchangeable 'L' and 'R' sounds in the Japanese language led to it being translated to Louie by mistake.

MEGA GAMES I

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Various



NEAR THE END of 1992, Sega started releasing a series of compilation games in Europe, each of which featured three previously released games on a single cartridge. The first of these was called Mega Games I and contained Super Hang-On, World Cup Italia 90 and Columns. The compilation was then released in North America a year later as Triple Score: 3 Games in 1. This version included the same three games, though World Cup Italia 90 was obviously presented as its North American version, World Championship Soccer. Although it was originally released as a standalone cartridge, Mega Games I eventually became part of console bundles in Europe as a good way of ensuring new Mega Drive owners would instantly have a decent collection of games. ■

FACT

There were two versions of Super Hang-On for the Mega Drive. The initial release had more difficult handling and a smoother frame rate. This is the version in Mega Games I.

MEGA GAMES 2

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Various

WHEN YOU NAME your compilation Mega Games I, you'd better hope you've got a second one coming afterwards. Luckily for Sega, Mega Games 2 followed in 1983 and this time there was more of an action theme to proceedings, as the three games on offer were Golden Axe, Streets of Rage and The Revenge of Shinobi. Unlike its predecessor, however, Mega Games 2 wasn't made available to purchase in shops: it was only bundled with new Mega Drive II consoles. This meant if you already had a Mega Drive and were hoping to get three brilliant Sega action games for a lower price, you were more or less out of luck because there was no way of getting hold of it. ■

FACT

Although it was no longer part of the compilation, the main menu still features music from World Cup Italia 90.

MEGA GAMES 3

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Various

THE THIRD AND final Mega Games compilation was once again only made available as a bundled in game that was free for anyone purchasing a new Mega Drive II. This meant that, as before, anyone looking to simply save some money by expanding their library with three games on one cartridge weren't able to do so (unless they had a pal who'd just bought a Mega Drive II and was willing to sell, of course). This time they arguably weren't missing out so much, however, because its three games – Super Thunder Blade, Super Monaco GP and Alien Storm – weren't quite as blockbuster as those in Mega Games 2 and could probably be found relatively cheaply anyway by that point. ■

FACT

Once again, the menu screen music is the impossibly jaunty music from World Cup Italia 90, which doesn't really fit the tone when taking on alien blobs.

MEGA GAMES 6

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Various

A COUPLE OF years after its Mega Games series, Sega decided to try again with a new series called Mega Games 6. As the name suggests, this time the cartridge includes six games rather than three like before and, once again, it was only bundled with new Mega Drive II systems, meaning you couldn't buy it in the shops. Mega Games 6 contains Super Hang-On, World Cup Italia 90, Columns, Golden Axe, Streets of Rage and The Revenge of Shinobi, meaning it was essentially just Mega Games I and Mega Games 2 with a rubber band wrapped around them (metaphorically speaking). Still, there was no denying it was a hell of a way for new Mega Drive II owners to instantly have six decent games from day one. ■

FACT

The box claims that Super Hang-On is a two-player game, when this isn't actually the case.

MEGA GAMES 6 VOL 2

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Various

BY THIS POINT it just seemed like Sega was mixing things up for the sake of it. Mega Games 6 Vol 2 was once again only bundled with new Mega Drive II consoles, which made naming it Vol 2 a bit odd because there was no possible way for anyone to own both volumes. What made it even stranger was that three of the six games in Vol 2 were already in the first volume, meaning this was clearly just an alternative collection rather than a legitimate second entry in a series. This time the six games on offer were World Cup Italia 90, Alien Storm, Super Monaco GP, SuperThunder Blade, Super Hang-On and Columns, meaning players were basically getting Mega Games I and Mega Games 3 together. ■

FACT

The box for Vol 2 still insists that Super Hang-On is a two-player game. Trying to will it into existence by writing it on the packaging won't make it happen, you know.

MEGA 6 VOL 3

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Various

SEGA'S FINAL COMPILATION in the Mega Games series ditches the 'Games' from the title for no apparent reason but at least mixes things up for once. As ever, it was only available bundled in with new Mega Drive II purchases, but this time players got arguably the best from all three original Mega Games volumes as well as a welcome appearance from one of its most successful games ever. The six games included were Columns, The Revenge of Shinobi, Sega Soccer (which was World Cup Italia 90 with the licensing removed, because Sega suddenly realised it was five years out of date), Super Monaco GP, Streets of Rage and Sonic the Hedgehog (hooray!), making it easily the best of the Mega Games compilations. ■

FACT

This was the only one of all six Mega Games compilations to include separate manuals for each game, rather than a bespoke manual covering all of them.

MEGA-LO-MANIA

Year 1993
Publisher Virgin Interactive
Developer Sensible Software

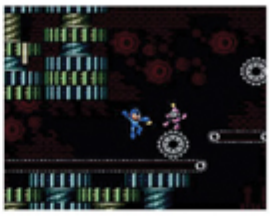
A NEW WORLD has formed, and it's a good one at that, with 28 islands and everything. What good is a world without a god, though? Step forward Scarlet, Caesar, Oberon and Madcap, four demigods who all want to claim the right to be this new world's deity. In order to do so, though, they're going to have to take the 100 unarmed humans at their disposal and use them to research and produce increasingly advanced tech in order to take over each island, one at a time. Mega-Lo-Mania – or in North America, Tyrants: Fight Through Time – was noted for being one of the first strong examples of the real-time strategy genre (it originally launched in 1991 on the Amiga) and saw widespread critical acclaim. ■

FACT

Mega-Lo-Mania got its own ill-fated dance single called 'Goin' All the Way'. The vinyl included mixes by Joey Negro, who later that year produced Take That and Lulu's version of 'Relight My Fire'.

MEGA MAN: THE WILY WARS

Year 1994
Publisher Capcom
Developer Minakuchi Engineering



ALTHOUGH MEGA MAN was primarily a Nintendo series, Capcom's blue bomber did make his way to the Mega Drive for one game. It was more like Capcom's version of Super Mario All-Stars, though, offering remakes of the first three NES Mega Man games, with enhanced graphics and music. After completing all three games (which is no mean feat) players can unlock Wily Tower, an entirely new chapter consisting of three new stages with entirely new robot bosses. For this section, the player is presented with all the unlockable weapons from the first three Mega Man games and can choose any eight to equip. The Wily Wars was only released in a boxed version in Europe and Japan: Americans could only get it for a brief while through the Sega Channel download service. ■

FACT

The North American version did re-emerge many years later: it's included as one of the 42 games included in the Sega Mega Drive Mini console.

MEGA SWIV

Year 1995
Publisher Time Warner Interactive
Developer The Sales Curve

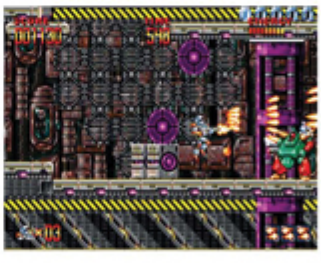
DURING A TEST flight near Bermuda, a prototype military aircraft vanishes into thin air. Before long, intelligence agencies all over the world start reporting similar things happening to their own prototypes. It turns out to be the work of an underground race who are stealing them all to build their own unstoppable army. Apparently they can't be that unstoppable, though, because your job is to bring them down using either a helicopter or a jeep (or both in two-player co-op). The helicopter can only shoot upwards in the style of a traditional vertically-scrolling shooter, while the jeep can shoot in any direction. The jeep is at risk of hitting ground-based obstacles, though, while the helicopter happily flies over them. If helicopters can be happy. ■

FACT

If you're wondering how a chopper or jeep can bring down an entire army, the enemy ships are all operated by drones. The game ends with you destroying a central core, making all the drones inoperable.

MEGA TURRICAN

Year 1994
Publisher Data East / Sony
Developer Factor 5



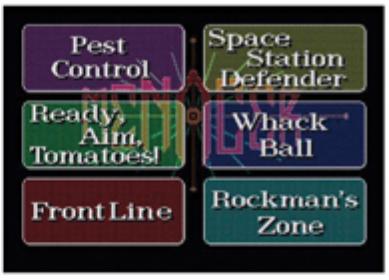
RIGHT AFTER DEVELOPMENT ended on Turrican II (aka Universal Soldier), Factor 5 began work on a third Turrican for the Mega Drive. The game was finished in Spring 1993 and sat for a whole year before it got a publishing deal, by which time it had already been ported to the Amiga as Turrican 3 (a rare instance of a port releasing before the original). Eventually Data East stepped in and released it as Mega Turrican, and it's a good job too: like the others in the series it's a fast-paced action platformer where Bren McGuire, the leader of the Freedom Forces, has to save a planet from the evil 'Machine' and its soldiers by spraying bullets all over the place. The main new addition to the game is a grappling hook. ■

FACT

Mega Turrican was originally going to show Mario and Sonic frozen in carbonite after you beat the first mini-boss. They were removed before launch, but the sprite files are still on the cartridge.

MENACER 6-GAME CARTRIDGE

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega



THREE MONTHS AFTER Nintendo released the Super Scope for the SNES, Sega announced its own light gun called the Menacer, which came in three parts: a small pistol that could be used on its own, a pair of twin sights that could be clipped on top of the barrel for more accuracy, and a shoulder stalk that could be rested against the body for extra support. The Menacer was bundled with a six-game cartridge that included a series of mini-games designed to show the gun's abilities: while these mainly entailed a bunch of shooting galleries and a weird Breakout clone, the most notable of the six was easily Ready, Aim, Tomatoes!, a shooting gallery based on ToeJam & Earl where players shot tomatoes at enemies. ■

FACT

According to Sega's Mac Senour, all six games were originally going to be based on existing Sega licenses, not just ToeJam & Earl. These were to include Joe Montana and David Robinson sports mini-games.

MERCS

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

MERCS WAS A Capcom arcade game that, in Japan at least, was a sequel to its 1985 hit Commando (the games were known as Wolf of the Battlefield I and II in Japan). The plot is straightforward: a former US president has been kidnapped by terrorists in Zutura, a fictional country that's almost certainly supposed to be South Africa – so, playing as one of America's top-secret 'Mercs', you have to plough through enemy lines to rescue him. The Mega Drive port of Mercs is actually two games in one: Arcade mode is a straight port of the Capcom coin-op whereas Original mode is a completely new story with new stages and the ability to swap between five different Mercs, each with their own skills. ■

FACT

The US box doesn't mince its words when it comes to terrorists: 'They messed with your country: now you're gonna make 'em scream!'

MICHAEL JACKSON'S MOONWALKER

Year 1990
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

WHEN IT CAME to Sega's early attempts to license games based on well-known personalities, there was none more lucrative than Michael Jackson, easily the biggest worldwide name in entertainment at the time. Moonwalker was loosely based on the movie of the same name and has Michael making his way through a series of stages as he tries to rescue children from the evil Mr Big. The aim is to explore each level for hidden children (which in hindsight, given the subsequent allegations that would hound him, was a slightly unfortunate design choice) while attacking enemies by firing magic at them from his feet and fingertips. Once all the children have been collected, Bubbles the monkey appears and points Michael towards the location of the boss fight: this is usually a face-off against a number of enemies. By holding down the

FACT

This wasn't the only time Michael Jackson starred in a Sega game. He had a small cameo in Space Channel 5 and a much larger role in its sequel as a character called Space Michael.

A button Michael can do a spin which triggers a dance sequence where all the enemies on screen dance alongside him before dropping dead. Each of the five levels – Club 30, Street, Woods, Cavern and Mr Big's Hideout – is accompanied by Mega Drive renditions of five popular MJ songs ('Smooth Criminal', 'Beat It', 'Another Part of Me', 'Billie Jean' and 'Bad' respectively). The game ends with Mr Big flying off into space in a spaceship, and Michael turning into a giant robot and flying after him. Just in case being given directions by a monkey in dungarees, kicking stars at enemies and literally dancing thugs to death wasn't strange enough. ■

MICK & MACK AS THE GLOBAL GLADIATORS

Year 1992
Publisher Virgin Games
Developer Virgin Games

IT'S HARD TO decide whether Global Gladiators was a cynical, capitalist tie-in (given its McDonald's branding) or a noble attempt to teach children how to save the environment. Two hip kids by the name of Mick and Mack are hanging out at their local McDonald's (because of course they are), reading a comic book called *The Global Gladiators*. All of a sudden, Ronald McDonald appears out of thin air and zaps the pair inside the comic book, like an absolute sod. It's up to Mick and Mack to use their goo shooters to clean up four large areas: Slime World, the Mystical Forest, Toxi-Tone and Arctic World. According to the manual, the aim is to 'think globally and act locally' to make the world a better place, which is an admirable message until you realise that in order to clear each stage, you have to collect enough golden arches to trigger the exit. There's also a bonus mini-game where players stand in front of three large bins and have to collect falling glass, cans and paper then drop them in the correct bin, while also avoiding falling anvils (which to the best of my knowledge can't be recycled). It's never made clear exactly how guns that shoot goo can somehow clean up other goo, but that must just be one of the big mysteries about the environment: what really matters in this case is that Mick & Mack is regarded as one of the more entertaining platformers on the Mega Drive, with great music to boot. ■

FACT

Global Gladiators is actually the second game in the Mick & Mack canon: they originally appeared in Virgin's NES game MC Kids.

MICKEY MANIA: THE TIMELESS ADVENTURES OF MICKEY MOUSE

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Traveller's Tales

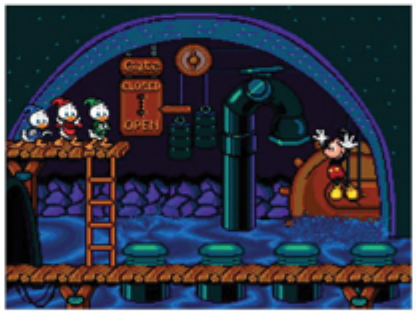
THIS WONDERFULLY DESIGNED platformer is based on the history of Mickey Mouse, going all the way back to his original appearance in *Steamboat Willie* and guiding players through other classic animated shorts: *The Mad Doctor*, *Moose Hunters*, *Lonesome Ghosts*, *Mickey and the Beanstalk* and *The Prince and the Pauper* (as well as a bonus stage based on *The Band Concert*). Although the general gameplay mechanics are basic –Mickey can only jump and throw marbles at enemies – the art design and the number of references and in-jokes contained in each stage (such as modern Mickey encountering his black and white self in *Steamboat Willie*) make it an absolute treat for fans of vintage Disney, if a little on the difficult side. ■

FACT

This was the first game partly designed by David Jaffe, who would go on to design Twisted Metal and direct God of War, both of which were slightly more mature than Mickey Mania.

MICKEY'S ULTIMATE CHALLENGE

Year 1994
Publisher Hi Tech Expressions
Developer Designer Software



DON'T YOU JUST hate it when you dream about being in a kingdom called Beanswick, and realise you have to complete five mini-games in order to help out a bunch of Disney characters? Of course you don't, that's never happened to you. It's happened to Mickey, though, and once he clears all five mini-games – Sorting Books, Moving Potions, Picture Matching, Playing the Pipes and Guess the Tools – he'll earn objects that can be exchanged with different characters for magic beans. After he plants the five beans, a giant beanstalk grows out of the sky and Mickey climbs it to confront a sleeping giant, so he can ask him to stop snoring and bothering the townsfolk with the noise. Which is a bit rude, really. ■

FACT

You wake the giant up via a sliding puzzle of a picture of an alarm clock. Once he's awake, the alarm clock wakes up Mickey too: it was all a dream! Which you already knew, because it said that in the intro.

MICRO MACHINES

Year 1993
Publisher Codemasters
Developer Codemasters

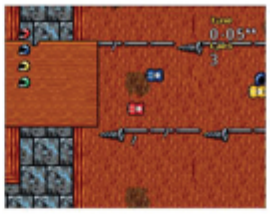
CODEMASTERS' ICONIC RACING game was based on the popular Micro Machines toys made by Galoob (which was later bought by Hasbro). Although its top-down viewpoint had been seen in other racing games, Micro Machines' unique twist was that each of its cars were minuscule and its tracks were designed as if a child had created them in the real world. This meant racing 4x4 cars on breakfast tables while dodging potato waffles and beans, speeding Formula One cars across pool tables and using the holes as tunnels, and driving sports cars in a classroom, with rulers used as bridges to travel between desks. There were two race types: a standard four-car affair, or a head-to-head where forcing a player off the edge of the screen scored you a point. ■

FACT

Ads and reviews for the game appeared in March 1993 but Codemasters didn't have a licence with Sega. It wasn't until the two made friends and arranged a licensing deal that the game finally went on sale in July.

MICRO MACHINES 2: TURBO TOURNAMENT

Year 1994
Publisher Codemasters
Developer Codemasters



AT FIRST GLANCE the second Micro Machines game offers more of the same, with an increased number of vehicles and over 50 tracks to race along including beaches, workshops and bathrooms. The game's biggest addition, however, is its greatly improved multiplayer support. Some versions of the game came in the form of a J-Cart: this was a special cartridge developed by Codemasters that came with two extra controller ports built into it: this meant players could plug a third and fourth controller directly into the game itself to unlock support for up to four players. Even better was the option to have eight-player races, with each controller being shared by two players (using either Left and Right or A and C to steer, and cars automatically accelerating). ■

FACT

Other versions of the game are on a standard cartridge, but still support four controllers using Sega's 4-Player Adaptor. The back of the box will tell you whether the cartridge is a J-Cart.

MICRO MACHINES: TURBO TOURNAMENT 96

Year 1995
Publisher Codemasters
Developer Supersonic Software

THE THIRD MICRO Machines continued to add even more features. New environments included gymnasiums, campsites and barbecues, while new vehicles like cop cars, solar powered cars and jets added to the variety. The J-Cart feature returned, meaning so did eight-player gameplay, and this time Codemasters really drove home (pun intended) the social element by including invites and a 1st place certificate for anyone keen to host their own Micro Machines party. The biggest new feature, though, was the Construction Kit, which allowed players to create their own tracks, tinkering with elements such as vehicle speed, grip and even weather. Up to 10 tracks could be saved on the cartridge itself, but players could also generate passwords that would let them share tracks with their friends. ■

FACT

It's well-known among UK gamers that Violet Berlin from CITV show *Bad Influence!* is a playable character from Micro Machine 2 onwards. What's less known is that Jeremy Daldry from Sky One's *Game World* is also playable.

MICRO MACHINES MILITARY

Year 1996
Publisher Codemasters
Developer Supersonic Software

THE FOURTH AND final Micro Machines game on the Mega Drive decided to mix things up with a military theme. This time all the different vehicle types available – including tanks, choppers, armored personnel carriers, jeeps and land-skimmers – were armed with weaponry, allowing you to blast opponents with a well-aimed shot to make them spin out. All the previous playable characters return but are now decked out in combat gear, and there are a bunch of new environments to race on including picnic tables, farmyards, snowscapes and even toy battlefields (which makes sense). Micro Machines Military also marked another outing for the J-Cart, once again providing players with another two ports to allow for up to eight players to take part. ■

FACT

The Micro Machines series continued beyond the Mega Drive, with Micro Machines V3 (PlayStation) and V4 (PS2, DS) launching in 1997 and 2006 respectively.

MIDNIGHT RESISTANCE

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Data East

JOHNNY FORD AND his dad Dr Malcolm Ford are the ultimate anti-drug team. Johnny is an ace Narcotics Control Agency operative while his dad has developed a serum that will cure drug addiction. When the Crimson King – the head of a powerful drug cartel – kidnaps his old man, it's up to Johnny to rescue him. Midnight Resistance is a reasonably faithful port of a 1989 arcade game, but while the arcade version had a special control system that let players move and fire in different directions, the Genesis game has a number of different control options that attempt to provide a reasonable alternative. These range from the ability to toggle rapid fire and lock it in a certain direction, to using the B button to rotate your weapon's aim direction. ■

FACT

A Midnight Resistance arcade machine plays a part in the movie *Robocop 2*, when Robocop grabs a police officer by the face and throws him into it, knocking it over.

MIG-29 FIGHTER PILOT

Year 1993
Publisher Domark
Developer PanelComp / The Kremlin

THIS FLIGHT SIMULATOR is a follow-up to Domark's 1990 home computer game MiG-29 Fulcrum, and lets players see what it's like flying the Mikoyan MiG-29, the Soviet Air Force's top fighter jet. General Hasouz from the Middle Eastern state of Arzaria has invaded Sautar for its oil, so the UN decides that the Soviets will fly alongside NATO forces to try and liberate Sautar. There are five missions in the game, along with a training mission to help players get to the grips with the complicated controls (which are so detailed that players can raise or lower their undercarriage, turn on wheel brakes and air brakes, and drop flares and chaff. The polygonal visuals were rare for consoles at the time but the frame rate suffered as a result. ■

FACT

Despite being called MiG-29 Fighter Pilot on the box, the game's title screen actually says MiG-29 Fulcrum.

MIGHT AND MAGIC II: GATES TO ANOTHER WORLD

Year 1991
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer New World Computing

THE SECOND GAME in the hugely popular Might and Magic RPG franchise has players putting together a party of up to six characters and trying to save the world of Cron. There are eight character classes to choose from (Knight, Paladin, Archer, Cleric, Sorcerer, Robber, Ninja and Barbarian) and five races too (Human, Elf, Dwarf, Gnome and Half-Orc). Like many other RPGs of its era, the game is played in a first-person perspective with the player moving screen by screen. One of the more unconventional elements of the game is aging: each new character starts at 18 and will continue to age as the game progresses, with certain scenarios resulting in their age rising or falling dramatically. If they get too old, they can suddenly die. ■

FACT

Right as you start the game you'll see a pub called 'The Slaughtered Lamb'. This is a reference to the movie *An American Werewolf in London*.

MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Banpresto

THERE WERE FIVE completely different Mighty Morphin Power Rangers games released at the height of the series' popularity: one for each major system at the time. The Mega Drive version is a one-on-one fighting game in which players choose their favorite ranger then take on a series of enemies from Rita Repulsa's evil arsenal until they're all defeated. Each fight consists of two main rounds: when you beat the enemy in the first round they'll grow to a much larger size, and your Ranger will jump into the Megazord mech to continue the fight in the second round. It's also possible to unlock the Green Ranger, and in doing so also unlock his Dragonzord, should you be that way inclined. ■

FACT

During the intro sequence, Rita's tower has a sign saying Bandora Palace. This was the name of the tower in *Kyoryu Sentai Zyuranger*, the Japanese version of the show.

MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS: THE MOVIE

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Banpresto

WHEN THE *POWER Rangers* movie launched, once again every system got its own unique game. This time the Mega Drive version was a side scrolling beat 'em up rather than a one-on-one fighting game. Players could choose from any of the five main Rangers or the White Ranger as they fought through six stages in an attempt to defeat the evil purple villain Ivan Ooze, who basically looks like a grape-flavoured Freddy Krueger. Despite supposedly being based on the movie, only levels 1, 2 and 6 cover the events of the film. Levels 3, 4 and 5 are instead presented as flashbacks that cover specific episodes from the TV series, thereby allowing the game to introduce a wider variety of bosses. ■

FACT

By the time the *Power Rangers* movie launched the Red, Black and Yellow Rangers were played by different actors. The flashback stages in this game replace them with the originals.

MIKE DITKA POWER FOOTBALL

Year 1991
Publisher Accolade
Developer Ballistic

ACCOLADE'S TAKE ON American football was an unlicensed game in more ways than one: not only did it not have the official NFL or NFLPA licence, it didn't even have the official Sega licence, meaning the cartridges were manufactured without Sega's approval. That's not to say it didn't have a few interesting ideas, however. A unique Final Drive mode would start a game off with your team behind and in possession with just a couple of minutes on the clock, and essentially challenge you to win the game: a good way to play when you don't have a lot of free time. It also had a unique optional passing system where the player could freeze time and calmly toggle between their receivers before throwing. ■

FACT

Mike Ditka was the coach of the Chicago Bears when this game launched. The following season he was fired and didn't find another team for five years. Coincidence? Well, yes.

MINNESOTA FATS: POOL LEGEND

Year 1995
Publisher Data East
Developer Data East

IN CASE YOU weren't aware, Minnesota Fats is a pool legend(™). That's why his smiling face appears on the title screen of this pool game, which is the sequel to Side Pocket. There are seven types of pool on offer here – Eight Ball, Nine Ball, One Pocket, Rotation, 14.1 Continuous, Cut Throat and Three Ball. As well as the options to play in a tournament against CPU players or have a one-off game against a friend, the game's main feature is its Story mode, where you take on a series of opponents in an attempt to earn the right to play Mr Fats himself. This mode comes complete with its own cutscenes, and opponents even talk in dialogue boxes during the game as they line up shots. ■

FACT

Minnesota Fats, real name Rudolf Wanderone, never actually won a major pool tournament, but he was so important to the promotion of the game that he entered the Billiards Congress America Hall of Fame anyway.

THE MIRACLE PIANO TEACHING SYSTEM

Year 1992
Publisher Software Toolworks
Developer Software Toolworks

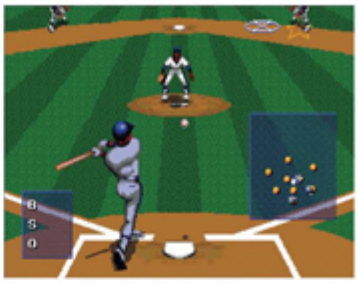
THE MEGA DRIVE may have specifically been a games console, but that didn't stop some developers trying to use it for other purposes. Software Toolworks, for example, designed the Miracle Piano Teaching System, a special controller that turned your Mega Drive (and other consoles like the NES and SNES) into a piano teacher. The Miracle was a full-sized keyboard complete with 88 pressure-sensitive keys and six different instrument sounds. Although it could be used as a standalone instrument, players could only get the most out of it by plugging it into their Mega Drive and taking part in a series of lessons on the TV. Despite this, the TV itself didn't actually play any sounds: all the music came from the keyboard itself. ■

FACT

The Miracle may be the only Mega Drive product with a Nintendo Seal of Quality on it. Too many were made for the NES so some were repurposed and the seal was covered up, but it's still there.

MLBPA BASEBALL

Year 1994
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer High Score Productions



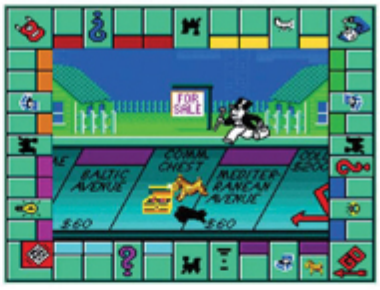
EA'S SECOND ATTEMPT at a baseball game (after Tony La Russa Baseball) saw it securing the MLBPA licence for accurate player names, but not the MLB licence for team names aor logos. All 28 teams' entire rosters are present and accounted for, as are their full stats from the 1993 season. Players can take part in a full 162-game season, with the game's built-in battery back-up saving all their progress and stats. The box specifically boasts about the way the game includes much of the sport's minutiae, such as 'snap throws, run-downs, the double switch, cutoff man, even bad hops and booted balls'. It's not clear if the latter two relate to the baseball itself or a fight in the bar afterwards about a dodgy beer. ■

FACT

The cover shows the Boston Red Sox's Billy Hatcher sliding into a base. This is no relation to the Billy Hatcher who would appear in a Sega game nine years later.

MONOPOLY

Year 1992
Publisher Parker Brothers
Developer Sculptured Software



MONOPOLY HAS BEEN presented in video game form more than 20 separate times over the years, and of all the versions ever released this Genesis game is… certainly one of them. Up to eight players can take part, and they can all be toggled between human and CPU control (so if you've ever really desperately wanted to see eight AI players take each other on, then knock yourself out). That aside, what we have here is a fairly straightforward interpretation of the game's official rules, albeit with little animations to make things more entertaining. There are no real options to change the rules to your own liking or apply any 'house rules', so as long as you're a stickler for the official Monopoly regulations this offers everything you need. ■

FACT

The longest ever game of Monopoly lasted 70 days, whereas playing it with your family only feels like it's taking that long.

MORTAL KOMBAT

Year 1993
Publisher Arena Entertainment
Developer Probe Entertainment

OF ALL THE fighting games that emerged following the success of Street Fighter II, Mortal Kombat was by far the most iconic. Its use of digitised sprites taken from footage of real actors gave it a unique look that made it stand apart from other fighting games, and its engaging plot – about fighters from the Earth realm taking part in a tournament to stop the Outworld taking over – had players invested in its characters. More importantly, the game was notorious for its gory Fatalities, which could be activated on the Mega Drive by entering the code ABACABB during one of the opening screens. This gave the Mega Drive version a serious edge over the SNES port, which had been stripped of its bloodier content at Nintendo's request. ■

FACT

It's claimed that the ABACABB code is a reference to *Abacab*, a 1981 album by the band Genesis. Deathcore metal band ABACABB then took their name from the code itself.

MORTAL KOMBAT II

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Probe Entertainment

WITH MORTAL KOMBAT now established as a serious contender to the Street Fighter series, Mortal Kombat II built on its predecessor in every possible way. The character roster increased from seven to twelve and each fighter was now blessed with multiple Fatalities, so players could choose exactly how they wanted to disembowel their opponents. For those who considered themselves lovers rather than fighters, the addition of new Babality and Friendship finishers allowed players to either transform their opponents into children, or do something nice to them instead (such as giving them a signed photo or a toy doll). It wasn't all good news, however: the removal of favourites Sonya Blade and Kano from the roster left many fans upset, leading to their eventual return in the third game. ■

FACT

The arcade version of Mortal Kombat II would trigger a secret version of Pong after every 250 two-player matches.

MORTAL KOMBAT 3

Year 1995
Publisher Williams Entertainment
Developer Sculptured Software

ALTHOUGH MORTAL KOMBAT 3 saw the return of Sonya and Kano, it also saw the departure of Scorpion, an even more popular character. This was the only major negative, however: there were now 14 playable characters including robot assassins Cyrax and Sektor (plus Smoke, who was a hidden fighter). The main combat was also tweaked for the first time, with a new Run button allowing players to dash towards their opponent, and the introduction of 'chain combos', which were speedy preset combos that could be pulled off with specific button presses. The new Mercy finisher gave defeated opponents a sliver of health to keep fighting, setting them up for the other new finishers, Animalities, where you could turn into a beast and maul your hapless victim. ■

FACT

Series co-creator Ed Boon learned his lesson from the fan backlash after Scorpion was cut from MK3. At the time of writing there have been eight main MK games since, and he's been in every one.

MR NUTZ

Year 1994
Publisher Ocean Software
Developer Ocean Software

MR NUTZ IS a squirrel with 'a lotta nutz, a lotta gutz and one enormous tail'. He's also got a mission: to track down a selfish Yeti who plans to turn the Earth into a frozen kingdom that he can rule over, with absolutely no regard for anyone else's warmth or comfort. What a swine. Mr Nutz has to run, jump and tail-whip his way through six stages: the forest, the treetops, a cottage, a volcano underpass, a circus and finally the obligatory ice stage (although this time it's at least relevant to the plot). Along the way he can pick up acorns to chuck at enemies, but this aside the game itself is a fairly straightforward platformer, if an inoffensive one that's serviceable enough. ■

FACT

A sequel called Mr Nutz: Hoppin' Mad was released on the Amiga. It was planned to be released on the Mega Drive as Mr Nutz 2 but this version was scrapped.

MS PAC-MAN

Year 1991
Publisher Tengen / Time Warner Interactive
Developer Innerprise Software

IN 1990, TENGEN released its own port of Ms Pac-Man for the NES, complete with a bunch of new additions and features. This Mega Drive release is a port of that port, albeit with enhanced visuals. Rather than the four maze types from the arcade game, the Tengen version of Ms Pac-Man features four separate game modes, each with their own unique mazes: Arcade (the original four), Mini (much smaller ones), Big (much larger ones) and Strange (unconventional, odd ones). Ms Pac-Man also has a speed boost move that you can either turn on by holding a button, or choose to have on permanently. This makes it easier to outrun the ghosts, and also helps you get through the earlier stages at a brisker pace. ■

FACT

Unlike the arcade version, the Mega Drive version also has an actual end: if you finish level 32, you'll see a cutscene where Pac-Man and Ms Pac-Man wave at the camera and then relax on a beach.

MUHAMMAD ALI HEAVYWEIGHT BOXING

Year 1992
Publisher Virgin Interactive
Developer Park Place Productions

AFTER HELPING LAUNCH both the Madden and NHL series on the Mega Drive for EA, it went without saying that Park Place Productions had developed a reputation for sports games. Virgin Interactive hoped lightning would strike again with this boxing game, starring the most famous boxer who ever lived. There are 10 fighters in total here, but only Ali is real: the rest are fictional boxers with names like Bart Rambler, Tommy Hammer and Bruno Franko (who must surely have been based on Frank Bruno). As well as your standard exhibition match option, you can also take part in a tournament, where you pick from the 10 characters and beat the others until you reach Ali (or someone else, if he's the one you decided to pick). ■

FACT

The American version of the game came with a trading card, giving information on Ali's career on the back.

M.U.S.H.A.

Year 1991
Publisher Seismic
Developer Compile

M.U.S.H.A. IS THE third game in the Aleste series of shoot 'em ups and is set in 2290, where humans have set up colonies on various moons, planets and space stations. Unfortunately, after setting up an 'intellicomputer' called Dire 51 at one of these stations, it gains sentience, decides to take over and plans to destroy the Earth. You are Terri, a pilot who flies a special mech called a M.U.S.H.A., and it's up to you to destroy Dire 51. The game uses power-ups almost like armour: you have your main gun which can be upgraded, but you can also collect secondary weapons. If you take a hit, you lose your secondary weapon, and if you don't have one you'll die. ■

FACT

In case you're wondering, M.U.S.H.A. stands for Metallic Uniframe Super Hybrid Armour. Now that you know it, it's obvious, isn't it?

MUTANT CHRONICLES: DOOM TROOPERS

Year 1995
Publisher Playmates Interactive
Developer Adrenalin Entertainment

IN 1993, SWEDISH company Target Games released Mutant Chronicles, a pen-and-paper RPG set in a post-apocalyptic world where humans have set up colonies on various moons, planets and space stations (I'm sure I've heard that somewhere before). Doom Troopers is an action game based on that universe, and puts you (or you and a friend) in control of Mitch Hunter and Max Steiner as they take on the Dark Legion Forces and their mutated army. There are eight stages in total, and while the action can get quite repetitive this is somewhat redeemed by the gruesome manner in which you can kill many of your enemies: expect to see plenty of heads popping into the air in a bloody fountain. ■

FACT

A *Mutant Chronicles* movie was released in 2008, and starred Thomas Jane and Ron Perlman. It ended up with a Rotten Tomatoes score of 18 per cent.

MUTANT LEAGUE FOOTBALL

Year 1993
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Mutant Productions

THIS COMEDY TAKE on American football was certainly a departure from EA's John Madden series (though contrary to popular belief it isn't a modified version of Madden, and was rebuilt from scratch). There are 19 teams to choose from, each made up of trolls, robots, aliens, skeletons and super-humans, and there are 19 stadiums to go with them, set in the likes of a cemetery, an asylum and an asteroid. Although the standard rules of American football apply for the most part – touchdowns, extra points, downs and the like are still present – the fields are plagued with hazards like pits, rocks and thin ice, and players can physically kill their opponents. You can also bribe the referee to help things go your way when needed. ■

FACT

The game includes a series of 'nasty audibles', one of which makes the entire team try to kill the referee. The other player can take control of the referee as he tries to escape.

MUTANT LEAGUE HOCKEY

Year 1994
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Mutant Productions

THE FOLLOW-UP TO Mutant League Football decided to try the same trick again, this time going for an over-the-top take on EA's NHL series of ice hockey games. There are 23 teams to choose from this time and 23 accompanying arenas, some of which are now named after real-life venues (such as Madness Square Garden and the St Mucus Arena instead of Madison Square Garden and the St Louis Arena). As with Football the general game plays like you would expect an ice hockey game to play, with the added bonus that you can slam into opponents and 'kill' them (although this time they're replaced with players on the sidelines). Ref bribing returns, accompanying the likes of exploding pucks, chainsaws and ice pits. ■

FACT

The Mutant League franchise spawned an animated TV series and a line of action figures. A Mutant League Basketball game was also planned, but was scrapped.

MYSTIC DEFENDER

Year 1989
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

ALEXANDRA, THE DAUGHTER of the Supreme Deity, has been kidnapped by the evil King Zao's henchman Zareth. It's up to Joe Yamato – part veteran martial artist, part combat magician – to head to Azuchi Castle to smack Zareth in the plums and rescue Alexandra. Mystic Defender is based on the manga series *Spirit Warrior* (known in Japan as *Kujaku-Oh*, or *Peacock King*), though many of that series' details were removed while localising the game for the west. It's a side-scrolling action platformer where Joe is able to fire mystical blue fireballs at his enemies. As you proceed you'll also earn the ability to charge and unleash a large flamethrower attack, as well as the ability to fire deadly bouncing balls around the screen. ■

FACT

When you rescue Alexandra at the end of the Japanese version she's completely nude from top to bottom. Obviously this wouldn't do in the west, so she was given a pink dress.

MYSTICAL FIGHTER

Year 1992
Publisher DreamWorks
Developer KID Corp

THIS LITTLE-KNOWN BEAT 'em up follows the adventures of Red Lion and White Lion, a pair of mystical fighters(™) who have been summoned to defeat the Evil Lord Kabuki and prevent him taking over the Mystical Kingdom. The problem is, they've been trapped in the Underworld, so they have to fight their way out of there first, taking on Kabuki's servants, before they can reach the big boss himself. Mystical Fighter is a straightforward enough game on paper, with only a single attack button and a jump button, though players can also collect scrolls that let them unleash magical attacks, ranging from lightning and earthquakes to snowstorms and even summoning a ghost warrior. It may not be in anyone's Top 10 lists but its unique setting makes Mystical Fighter worth a look. ■

FACT

KID Corp was a Japanese studio that in the early '90s started focusing mainly on developing visual novels. KID stands for Kindle Imagine Develop, so while they didn't know it at the time the name did fit.

NBA ACTION 94

Year 1994
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer Malibu Interactive

AFTER DABBLING WITH standalone basketball games like David Robinson's Supreme Court, Sega decided to launch its own actual basketball series called NBA Action in an attempt to compete with EA's games. The first was NBA Action 94, which included all 27 NBA teams fully licensed with real logos and their entire 1993–94 player rosters. Players could take part in an exhibition game or play a full 82-game season (with options for shorter seasons lasting 20 or 40 games if needed). Three special Hall of Fame teams were added, called Legends, Stars and Heroes (because apparently there's a distinction between those) and there's limited commentary by NBA announcer Marv Albert. The game's isometric viewpoint gave it an impressive look but its sluggish feel had its critics too. ■

FACT

Some of the Hall of Fame players include Bill Walton, Bob Lanier, 'Pistol Pete' Maravich, Nate Thurmond and Nate Archibald. Because you can never have too many Nates.

NBA ACTION 95 STARRING DAVID ROBINSON

Year 1995
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer Double Diamond Sports

RATHER THAN FOLLOWING the typical sports game tradition of slightly iterating on the previous year's game, NBA Action 95 was essentially rebuilt from scratch with an entirely different developer. Gone was NBA Action 94's isometric viewpoint, and replacing it was a completely different top-down camera, allowing for a faster paced game. Marv Albert was back to provide more commentary, and this time there were no fewer than 19 different 'best of' teams on top of the 27 NBA teams: the previous three Hall of Fame ones, All Stars East, All Stars West, NBA All Stars, NBA Veterans and 12 separate 'Class of' teams covering 1983 to 1994. Players also could create up to 40 new players and could trade and new existing players to mix Season mode up a bit. ■

FACT

The NBA Action series would continue with two more games on the Sega Saturn, before Sega pulled the plug on it after NBA Action 98.

NBA ALL-STAR CHALLENGE

Year 1993
Publisher Flying Edge
Developer Beam Software

YOU'D BE FORGIVEN for thinking that a basketball game that didn't have any 'proper' basketball in it would be a bit of a non-starter, but that was precisely what NBA All-Star Challenge offered (or rather didn't offer). Each of the 27 NBA teams is represented here by a single player: Jordan for the Bulls, Ewing for the Knicks, Barkley for the Suns, Olajuwon for the Rockets and so on. These players can take on one of four different events: a one-on-one match, a free throw contest, a 3-point shootout or a game of H.O.R.S.E. (where you have to make your opponents match your shot). There's also a one-on-one tournament, should you be craving something a little bit meatier. ■

FACT

Reviews of the game were mixed, though UK magazine *Mega* gave it an awful 19 per cent, claiming 'there's practically nothing there' and that it was 'a waste of money, even for two players'.

NBA HANGTIME

Year 1996
Publisher Midway
Developer Funcom

NBA HANGTIME WAS originally supposed to be the third NBA Jam game, until the NBA Jam name was acquired by Acclaim. This may have left Midway without the name, but it still had the game: specifically, the development team who had worked on the previous two entries. NBA HangTime, then, is NBA Jam 3 in all but title, and improves on its predecessors by managing to accomplish some of the things the other 16-bit versions of NBA Jam couldn't, such as sprite scaling and on-court player likenesses. The other big addition in HangTime was the ability to create your own player, then play them in games to increase their stats, improving them until they eventually became better than any of the actual stars in the game. ■

FACT

If you want to play in the secret outdoor court seen in the screenshot, use the controller buttons to spell out BARRACUDA on the Tonight's Matchup screen.

NBA JAM

Year 1994
Publisher Arena Entertainment
Developer Iguana Entertainment

IN EARLY 1994 NBA Jam was declared the highest-earning arcade game of all time with around $1 billion in revenue, so if you didn't think a home version was a no-brainer then I really don't know what to say to you. It's a two-on-two basketball game, and while it features fully licensed NBA teams and players, it certainly doesn't include proper NBA regulations: shoving opponents to the ground is completely fair game, back-court and out-of-bounds violations aren't a thing and enormous, 40-foot dunks are par for the course. Score three in a row and your player would go 'on fire', giving them unlimited turbo boost and turning their dunks into flame-filled spectacles. Easily one of the most entertaining sports games on the Mega Drive. ■

FACT

The arcade version's attract mode included a picture of two cheerleaders saying messages like 'let's play two on two' and 'winners don't do drugs'. One of the cheerleaders was Kerri Hoskins, aka Sonya Blade in Mortal Kombat.

NBA JAM TOURNAMENT EDITION

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Iguana Entertainment

THE SECOND NBA Jam game improved on its predecessor in practically every way (except for maybe on the court, where it was more or less business as usual). Team rosters expanded from two to three players (and could be expanded to five by winning a tournament mode), though this brought with it a new 'injury' stat, which meant players had to be swapped in and out in order to stay fit. There's a new 28th team that consists of rookies from the 1994 NBA Draft. There's also a new in-game feature called hotspots: turn these on and numbered icons will appear on the court: if you can successfully shoot while standing on one of these you'll get that number in points. ■

FACT

Early versions of the arcade NBA Jam TE included the likes of Sub Zero, Raiden and Reptile from Mortal Kombat as hidden characters, but the NBA asked that they be removed.

NBA LIVE 95

Year 1994
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Hitmen Productions

AFTER RELEASING FIVE NBA games with a confusing naming scheme that made it nearly impossible for gamers to figure out which was the newest title, EA finally simplified things by launching the NBA Live series and going with the same 'yearly update' structure its Madden and NHL games enjoyed. The new brand brought with it a new look and feel too: the side-on viewpoint from the other games was ditched and replaced with the same isometric camera that won praise with FIFA, while other new features like a speed burst and a new T-meter for free throws were introduced. Although it included practically all the official teams and rosters for the 1994–95 NBA season, one exception was Charles Barkely, who'd refused to sign a licensing agreement. Instead, he's called AC Green. ■

FACT

If you enter REFLOG as a user name when assigning controllers to each team, you'll unlock a hidden golf game.

NBA LIVE 96

Year 1995
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Hitmen Productions

THE SECOND NBA Live game adds the ability to call new plays on the fly by pressing X, Y or Z on a 6-button controller (or holding Start and pressing A, B or C on a 3-button one). The other main addition is the access to the player database: you can now edit and trade the players in each roster, as well as drafting in new talent or even creating your own players. The drafting comes into play right at the start of the game: the two new expansion teams (the Vancouver Grizzlies and Toronto Raptors) are included but don't have rosters yet, so before you can play a single game you have to draft their players and save it to the cartridge. ■

FACT

There are over 90 names of old players and development staff that are recognised by the game (such as Michael Jordan, or Magic Johnson). If you create a player with one of these names their stats and appearance will match that person.

NBA LIVE 97

Year 1996
Publisher EA Sports
Developer NuFX / Hitmen Productions

BY THE TIME NBA Live 97 came around, EA was focusing its attention on the PlayStation and Saturn. It wasn't quite ready to abandon the series on the Mega Drive yet, so the 16-bit improvements continued. This time a new 'player lock' feature let you choose a single player and control only them throughout the game, rather than all five players. New manual steal controls let players choose when to attempt a steal by pressing the A button (stealing was automatic in NBA Live 95 and 96). As well as these changes on the court, the game included four new game modes designed for more casual play: 2 on 2 Half Court, 3 on 3 Half Court, 3 Point Contest and Shoot Out Contest. ■

FACT

NBA Live 97's cover star was Mitch Richmond of the Sacramento Kings. Richmond moved to the Lakers in 2001 for his final season, and ended his career by dribbling out the clock to win his first NBA Championship.

NBA LIVE 98

Year 1997
Publisher THQ
Developer NuFX / Tiertex

MUCH LIKE THE Madden series, EA's lengthy run of basketball games on the Genesis ended more with a whimper than a bang (which was completely understandable given where its priorities now lay). Publishing duties were handed over to THQ as they were for Madden NFL 98, and improvements over the 97 edition were minimal. These included a new practice mode where you could take the court with either a team or a single player to brush up on your skills, the addition of an All-Star game that appeared during the Season mode, and refinements to the trading system that took player ratings into account to make trades more realistic. Technically this made it the best 16-bit game in the series, but only by a nose. ■

FACT

In case you need clarification, the correct order of EA Mega Drive basketball games goes Lakers vs Celtics, Bulls vs Lakers, Team USA, Bulls vs Blazers, NBA Showdown 94, NBA Live 95/96/97/98.

NBA SHOWDOWN 94

Year 1994
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Electronic Arts

BEFORE EA WENT isometric with its NBA Live series, this was the final game in its previous side-scrolling series (and theoretically should have been called Bulls vs Suns and the NBA Playoffs). By ditching the Playoffs name, however, EA also offered all 27 NBA teams for the first time, rather than just the 16 who had qualified for the post-season tournament. There's also the option to play a full 82-game season, as well as a more in-depth ratings system for each player – sponsored by trading card company Topps – which rates players on 14 different categories. Full custom teams were also available, meaning if you wanted to make a team with five Shaqs on it you could (good luck scoring any free throws with that team, though). ■

FACT

A number of EA Sports games, including this, had a small hologram sticker on the front of the first batch of copies with the words 'Limited Edition, 1st Round' on it and a unique number. The actual game was unchanged, though.

NCAA FINAL FOUR BASKETBALL

Year 1994
Publisher Mindscape
Developer Bitmasters

WHILE THE VAST majority of basketball games on the Genesis tended to focus on the professional game in the NBA, Mindscape instead went in a different direction and secured the official NCAA college basketball license. There are 64 teams from the NCAA I-A Division in here, each with their official names, logos and team colours. Although the player names aren't real (because NCAA restrictions prevent real player names and likenesses being used to promote products), you can edit the names of the players in each roster. The game received praise for its fluid animation but its awkward controls received criticism: when playing with a three-button controller, you had to press B+C together just to switch control to a different player. ■

FACT

The 1995 NCAA tournament, which is what this game was based on, ended with the UCLA Bruins winning their 11th title by defeating the Arkansas Razorbacks 89–78.

NCAA FOOTBALL

Year 1994
Publisher Mindscape
Developer Mindscape

BASKETBALL WASN'T THE only college sport Mindscape wanted a piece of: it also used its NCAA licence to make an American football game. NCAA Football featured 40 of the top Division I-A teams, with real logos and colours. This did, however, mean that many of the 100+ teams in the division at the time weren't represented in the game. Oddly, while there are Exhibition and Tournament modes, the latter is presented as a series of preset tournaments featuring the best teams from the '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s (though you can create your own bracket should you prefer). There are over 60 plays to choose from, including some specifically associated with college football such as the wishbone and the suicide blitz. ■

FACT

Someone must have been a fan of ancient Greek poetry: by entering BABCBCBABABACC on the title screen you'll unlock the Mycenae State Achaians and the Ilion Trojans, each with their own comedy stats.

NEW HORIZONS

Year 1994
Publisher Koei
Developer Koei

NOT TO BE confused with the Animal Crossing game on Switch, New Horizons is the sequel to Koei's seafaring simulation Uncharted Waters. Starting in 1522, shortly after it's discovered that the Earth is round, the game follows six different characters, each with their own different story and end goal. Whether you play as Portuguese adventurer Joao, Spanish naval officer Catalina, English privateer Otto, Dutch cartographer Ernst, Italian treasure hunter Pietro or Turkish merchant Ali, the story may be different but the aim remains the same: succeed in their goal by exploring the world and taking part in trades, treasure hunting, privateering and piracy. The game's open-ended nature means you can mainly choose to focus on a specific area of seafaring, so if you just want to focus on trade you can. ■

FACT

The game came bundled with a double-sided poster with the cover artwork on one side and a large map of the world on the other.

NEWMAN/HAAS INDYCAR FEATURING NIGEL MANSELL

Year 1994
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Gremlin Graphics

THIS IS A sequel to Nigel Mansell's World Championship Racing, but instead of focusing on Formula One Racing this one instead is based on the 1994 IndyCar season, in which Mansell took part. There are 15 tracks to choose from, all based on actual IndyCar circuits. Players can choose between Arcade mode – which simply involves racing with reckless abandon and automatically handles pitting for you – or Simulation mode, where you can customise your car, control pit activity and have to pay attention to the yellow flag racing rules. Compared to its predecessor, it has a clear visual overhaul, with trackside elements now made of basic polygons. While this makes the racing feel more immersive it does affect the frame rate somewhat. ■

FACT

Mansell had won the 1993 IndyCar World Series while racing for Newman/Haas, but only finished in 8th position in the 1994 season before heading back to F1.

NFL 95

Year 1994
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer FarSight Technologies

SEGA'S NAMING SCHEME for its NFL games was all over the place, which was fine at the time but isn't so great when you're trying to write a book that lists games in alphabetical order. NFL 95 is the fifth of its Genesis NFL games, and the last to include Joe Montana on the cover. It's based on the 1994 season and has fully licensed NFL teams and rosters (though Deion Sanders is still at Atlanta even though he was traded to the 49ers). The main improvements revolve around passing: if you're controlling the quarterback, the camera angle rises to let you see up to 65 yards ahead. More uniquely, you also have the option to control the receiver instead, and run your own route before calling for the ball. ■

FACT

The game's credits include a Special No Thanks section, dedicated to the likes of San Francisco International Airport's baggage crew, and programmer Jay Obernolte's fridge.

NFL 98

Year 1997
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer FarSight Technologies

AFTER ONLY RELEASING NFL 97 on the Saturn, Sega decided to bring the Genesis off the bench for one final play before it got to hang up its boots and have its jersey number retired. NFL 98 doesn't do anything massively different compared to the previous couple of games in the series, other than the obvious update to ensure that all the rosters, schedules and logos from the 1997 NFL season were present and correct. Players' stats were updated based on their performance in the 1996 season, with stats tracked in over 40 categories. Sega may never have managed to challenge the Madden series throughout the Genesis's life, but it at least stuck in there and kept fighting alongside it until the very end. ■

FACT

The correct order of Sega's NFL games is Joe Montana Football, Joe Montana II, NFL Sports Talk Football 93, NFL Football 94, NFL 95, Prime Time NFL, NFL 98.

NFL FOOTBALL 94 STARRING JOE MONTANA

Year 1993
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer Spectacular Games

THE FOURTH GENESIS NFL game – confused yet? – included the NFLPA licence for the first time in the series, adding real player names to the mix (even though Joe Montana had been on the box each time, his name wasn't actually in the games beyond the title screen). This also meant that the season mode let players track stats and view the league leaders in various categories in a 'Sega Sports Page' newspaper-style screen. A new 'behind the QB' viewpoint made passing more immersive and intuitive, while the addition of a speed burst move made it possible for ball carriers to put distance between themselves and defenders, or let the defence gain ground on runners during races to the endzone. ■

FACT

Joe Montana's 'Comeback Kid' nickname was no joke: he's the only player in NFL history to have two touchdown passes that were longer than 95 yards.

NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Iguana Entertainment

ACCLAIM'S TAKE ON American football does things a little differently. Rather than including fully licensed rosters for every team, it instead focuses solely on quarterbacks, with 19 of them appearing in the game. It's presented as 'three games in one': as well as the Play NFL mode which consists of your typical exhibition and season offerings, there's also QB Challenge and Simulation modes. The former lets you play through a series of mini-games using one of the 19 licensed quarterbacks (or a custom one, whose stats you can build before moving them into the main Play NFL mode). The latter, meanwhile, is a series of 30 scenarios from classic NFL matches that challenge you to replicate what happened in real life. ■

FACT

According to *Game Players* magazine, Park Place Productions was originally developing the game but Acclaim eventually pulled it and got Iguana to take over.

NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB 96

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Iguana Entertainment

THE SEQUEL TO Quarterback Club solves the major issue with its predecessor by including all the other official NFL player names, rather than just those of 19 quarterbacks, therefore allowing for things like substitutions and stat tracking during season mode. It also, however, removes the QB Challenge mode and replaces it with a more straightforward Practice mode, in which players control a 10-man team in Offence, Defence and Special Team drills (essentially killing off the point of the 'Quarterback Club' name in the process). Meanwhile, Simulation mode has been expanded from 30 scenarios to 50, although many of the scenarios from the previous game are among this new extended list. ■

FACT

As you beat the scenarios in Simulation mode you unlock cheat codes that affect gameplay. These include the chaotic Fumble mode, where players will instantly fumble the ball if they're hit.

NFL SPORTS TALK FOOTBALL 93 STARRING JOE MONTANA

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer BlueSky Software

OH LOOK, IT'S Sega again. This was its third NFL game, the third to feature Joe Montana on the cover and the second to include its revolutionary 'Sports Talk' commentary system (this time improved with more than double the number of lines). The big addition to this game is the presence of the NFL licence: not only does this mean the usual inclusion of real team names and logos, but also affects the commentary. No longer does Lon Simmons simply refer to 'Philadelphia' or 'Cleveland', he can now mix things up by occasionally referring to the Eagles or Browns instead. The one thing it's missing is the NFLPA licence, but if you're reading this book in order you already know what happened the following year. ■

FACT

The commentary was handled by Electronic Speech Systems, a speech synthesis company who had previously created the sampled speech for C64 games like Impossible Mission and Ghostbusters.

NHL HOCKEY

Year 1991
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Park Place Productions

THE FIRST IN a long line of ice hockey games that continues to this day, NHL Hockey did what Madden and FIFA failed to by arriving with a full league licence right off the bat (albeit without the real player names to match). Players could choose from all 22 official NHL teams and take part in either an exhibition game or start a playoff bracket for the Stanley Cup (either as one-off games or Best of 7). Above all else, though, NHL Hockey is most notable for absolutely nailing the mechanics on the first attempt: skating has a real feeling of momentum to it that makes it feel realistic without being too impossible to control, while body checking an opponent into the barriers is still massively satisfying to this day. ■

FACT

In Europe, the game didn't have the NHL licence and was instead known as EA Hockey, featuring international teams instead of NHL ones.

NHL 94

Year 1993
Publisher EA Sports
Developer High Score Productions

THE THIRD GAME in EA's hockey series – see NHLPA 93 on the opposite page first if you want to follow the series' progress in order – finally brings things together by combining the first game's NHL licence with the second's NHLPA licence to make the definitive hockey game with real team and player names. The result is what many believe remains the best game in the series, with additions like one-timer slap shots, a battery back-up for game saves, and a bunch of new presentational features like team-specific organ music backing up this belief. The only thing that's been removed, sadly, is the ability to fight with other players, making mindless violence a thing of the past. But hey, considering what you're left with anyway, it's worth it. ■

FACT

Players who pre-ordered NHL 21 on Xbox One or PlayStation were rewarded with NHL 94 Rewind; a repurposed version of NHL 1994 with the 2020–21 NHL rosters.

NHL 95

Year 1994
Publisher EA Sports
Developer High Score Productions

NHL 94 WAS undeniably great but it was also missing one crucial thing: a season mode. NHL 95 fixed this by letting players participate in a full 84-game season, complete with full team and player stats updating throughout, and real season awards like the Hart, Ross and Vezina trophies. The ability to create new players and trade existing ones was also added, giving a much-needed element of customisation, while on the ice a number of new moves were implemented to mix things up a bit: these included drop passes, fake shots and even letting your defenders lie down on the ice to try and block passes and shots. The general game speed was also increased, and a new 2-on-2 'Jam' mode allowed for more casual games if required. ■

FACT

A localised version of NHL 95 called Elitserien 95 was released in Sweden, replacing the NHL teams and players with those from the Swedish Elitserien league.

NHL 96

Year 1995
Publisher EA Sports
Developer High Score Entertainment

GREAT NEWS FOR fans of men punching each other's heads in: NHL 96 brought back fighting, presumably after realising it's an integral part of the sport. Also new to the 1996 edition was the ability to choose your skill level for the first time: previously the game's difficulty was generally based on the quality of the team you were playing against, but this time there were specific Rookie, Pro and All-Star difficulty levels to choose from. New player moves include one-touch passing, the give-and-go and the spin-o-rama, while new player animations let you spin opponents into the air with particularly hard body checks (related: you can also injure players and goalies now). It's a harder game in general, too, with improved defence AI and goalie abilities. ■

FACT

Every team's arena name is stored in the game's code, but they're never actually mentioned at any point in the game, suggesting this feature was abandoned.

NHL 97

Year 1996
Publisher EA Sports
Developer High Score Entertainment

NHL 97 WAS the first game in the series to launch on the PlayStation and the Saturn, so based on the FIFA, Madden and NBA Live games you can probably guess what's going to happen next. Sure enough, NHL 97 offers fewer improvements than its predecessors did, though that's not to say there isn't some interesting stuff here. A new Skills Challenge mode introduces four new mini games called Puck Blast, Rapid Fire, Shooting Accuracy and Puck Handling Relay, while three national teams – USA, Canada and Europe – have been added too (ah, don't we all love the nation of Europe). Finally, a number of new signature move animations have been included, such as passing the puck through your player's legs. ■

FACT

Spare a thought for SNES owners of NHL 97, who didn't get the national teams, signature moves or Skills Challenge mode, making the whole thing a bit pointless really.

NHL 98

Year 1997
Publisher THQ
Developer High Score Entertainment

WHEN THE BACK of your game's box declares that one of its biggest new features is 'enhanced penalty awareness including the two line pass rule', you know you've probably reached the point where you've done all you can and it's time to draw a line under the series on that system. Unsurprisingly, then, NHL 98's new feature list reads like a bunch of 'oh, that's nice' situations rather than actual marketable selling points: a choice of three different game speeds, player hot and cold streaks and a new coaching menu allowing you to give different tactics to different lines was hardly going to have many people throwing their copy of NHL 97 (or, indeed, NHL 94) into the trash and buying NHL 98 to replace it. ■

FACT

The NHL 98 cover star is Peter Forsberg, a Swedish player who (at the time of writing) is 4th in the list of all-time assists, behind only Wayne Gretzky, Mario Lemieux and Bobby Orr.

NHL ALL-STAR HOCKEY 95

Year 1995
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer Sega Midwest Studio

NOT CONTENT WITH letting EA take all the icy glory, Sega decided it wanted a piece of the NHL action too and secured both the NHL and NHLPA licences for this new take on ice hockey. Visually it was more impressive than EA's games, with larger characters and a wider range of animations: over 1,000 frames in total. It arguably sounded better too, thanks to Sega securing the services of announcer Marv Albert, who provides occasional short comments like 'shoots… scores' (not quite the 'expert colour commentary' the box suggests). Despite offering all the most popular features like a full 84-game season and battery back-up saving, critics ultimately decided it didn't have it where it counted: the consensus was that EA's games still felt better to play. ■

FACT

Sega released another NHL All-Star Hockey game for the Saturn later the same year, as well as a '98 sequel a couple of years later.

NHLPA HOCKEY 93

Year 1992
Publisher EASN / EA Sports
Developer EA Studios

THE JOYS OF alphabetical order mean we're now time travelling back to EA's second ice hockey game. The success of NHL Hockey led to this sequel, this time featuring the NHLPA licence for real player names (over 500 in total). However, it lost the NHL licence at the same time, meaning this was the only game in the entire series not to have real team nicknames and logos (instead offering generic names like Toronto, Chicago and Detroit). Despite this, unlicensed versions of the new expansion teams from Ottawa and Tampa Bay were still included. The most notable change on the ice was the goalies: whereas in NHL Hockey they just sort of slid about and tried to get in the way of the puck, now they can dive, lunge and make kick-saves. ■

FACT

NHLPA 93 includes a strange Crowd Meter screen, where you're told how many decibels the crowd's cheering hit during the game.

NIGEL MANSELL'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP RACING

Year 1993
Publisher GameTek / Konami
Developer Gremlin Graphics

THIS FORMULA ONE game is based on the 1992 F1 season and contains all 16 tracks from that season, presented in the order in which they were raced. There are 12 officially licensed drivers in the game: as well as Nigel Mansell himself, the likes of Michael Schumacher, Gerhard Berger and Mika Häkkinen appear too. Whereas most of Gremlin's racing games – including the SNES version of this one – were played with a first-person perspective, this one instead sits the camera behind the car in a 'chase' view. The most unique feature is the Mansell's Advice mode, where you choose a single track and race round it while a massive floating disembodied Nigel Mansell head tells you what speed you should be going round each corner. ■

FACT

The SNES version had a hilarious TV ad in the UK in which Rik Mayall played Nigel Mansell promoting his own game. YouTube it.

NIGHTMARE CIRCUS

Year 1996
Publisher Tectoy
Developer Funcom

WHEN EVIL CIRCUS owner Leto Diablo decided to end his circus business by setting fire to the tent on opening night and collecting the insurance money, someone spotted him lighting the match and he was given the electric chair for the audience members he burned to death, but not before he vowed to curse the spirits of the victims. A shaman warrior called Raven lost family that night, and years later when he returned to the site a massive ghost circus appeared out of nowhere. It's up to Raven to avenge the spirits of his loved ones by beating up anything he finds inside. Unfortunately, despite its brilliant plot, this Brazil-only release has a reputation as one of the worst games on the Mega Drive due to its complicated controls and never-ending levels. ■

FACT

Nightmare Circus was only physically released in Brazil but it did get a brief stint on the Sega Channel download service in the US.

NO ESCAPE

Year 1994
Publisher Psygnosis
Developer Bits Corporation

REMEMBER *NO ESCAPE*, the ridiculous 1994 action movie where Ray Liotta is a dangerous prisoner who's exiled to an abandoned island resort and has to fend for himself against the other prisoners located there? Well, someone did, and decided it was going to be big enough to warrant a movie tie-in, which is where this action platformer comes in. You're John Robbins (Liotta) and the aim is to explore the island of Absolom, fighting off Outsiders, until you can either fly away on a helicopter or escape in a stealth boat. On paper its non-linear level selection and rotoscoped characters means it could have been a hidden gem, but it's essentially what Prince of Persia would have been if it constantly threw endless enemies at you. ■

FACT

A Mega CD version was planned to be published by Sony Electronic Publishing but it ultimately decided to scrap the game.

NOBUNAGA'S AMBITION

Year 1993
Publisher Koei
Developer Koei

MOST PEOPLE'S AMBITIONS are sensible: lose some weight, learn a new language, spend every waking minute of your life writing video game encyclopedias. But Oda Nobunaga wasn't most people: in the 1500s he launched a war against other samurai to unify Japan. This strategy game from Koei attempts to retell these events via four different scenarios entitled Battle for the East (1560), Daimyo Power Struggles (1560), Ambition Untamed (1571) and Road Towards Unification (1582). Although you can obviously choose to play as Nobunaga himself, if you think he's too big for his boots you can play as one of 50 other Japanese warlords from that era and attempt to rewrite history by unifying Japan as someone from a different clan. ■

FACT

Nobunaga died when a samurai called Mitsuhide betrayed him and sent his troops to kill him. Nobunaga killed himself after asking his page to set his temple on fire so they couldn't take his head.

NORMY'S BEACH BABE-O-RAMA

Year 1994
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer High Score Productions

NORMY WAS A character from *Making It*, a comic strip created by Keith Robinson which had appeared in around 50 newspapers around the US and Canada. He's a beach bum whose world is rocked one day when a giant UFO appears and abducts all the babes from the beach. Acknowledging that a beach without babes is like the '90s without the sexism, Normy heads out across space and time to rescue the buxom beauties. His journey takes him through six distinct worlds: the prehistoric era, medieval times, a jungle, Transylvania, space and Hell (sorry, I mean 'Heck'). Starting off with a mallet that fires a boxing glove, Normy can collect other weapons along the way like custard pies and, um… another mallet, which fires a chicken this time. ■

FACT

As well as being the creator of the *Making It* comics, Keith Robinson also became the president of Intellivision in 1997. He passed away in 2017.

OLYMPIC GOLD

Year 1992
Publisher US Gold
Developer Tiertex

OLYMPIC GOLD WAS the official video game tie-in of the Barcelona Olympic Games in 1992. There are a total of seven events to take part in: the 100m Sprint, 110m Hurdles, Hammer Throw, Archery, Pole Vault, 200m Freestyle Swimming and Springboard Diving. The majority of these events rely on building up power or speed by quickly hitting the A and B buttons alternatively, then pressing the C button to perform a specific action (jumping a hurdle, throwing the hammer or what have you). Players can either practice a single event, play a custom mini-series or take part in a 'Full Olympics', where you choose one of eight nations (including the Unified Team) and play all seven events in a row, complete with opening and closing ceremonies. ■

FACT

The European PAL version includes Coca-Cola branding on the box and in the game, and even plays the 'Can't Beat the Real Thing' Coke jingle between events.

OLYMPIC SUMMER GAMES: ATLANTA 1996

Year 1996
Publisher US Gold
Developer Black Pearl Software

US GOLD RETAINED the rights to make the next Olympics game, but development duties went to Black Pearl Software. This time there were 10 events to choose from: 100m Sprint, 110m Hurdles, Pole Vault, Long Jump, Triple Jump, High Jump, Javelin, Discus, Skeet Shooting and Archery (so, great news for people with a fear of water). This 1996 effort looked far more realistic than its 1992 counterpart, with a move to an isometric camera view and more life-like sprites and animations. Players could now choose one of 32 different countries to represent, and also enter their own name to make them feel like it was really them smashing through the High Jump bar and bringing global shame on their nation. ■

FACT

America won the 1996 Olympics (because of course they did) with 44 gold medals. Great Britain got… (checks notes) one, for rowing.

ONSLAUGHT

Year 1991
Publisher Ballistic
Developer Code Monkeys

ANOTHER OF BALLISTIC'S unauthorised Genesis games, Onslaught is an action platformer where you play as Balthusar, a warrior who vows to avenge his father's execution by toppling the occupying forces and dictatorial rule in the land of Gargore, which he naturally does by pretty much butchering anyone he can find. Gargore is made up of a 16x16 map, with each square containing a different location to explore. Players can make their way through the map in any direction they like, though the general aim is to find the locations ruled by enemies and clear them all out in order to gradually take over the entire map. There are seven different weapons (ranging from maces and crossbows to bombs and magic demon faces), and you can choose between them at will. ■

FACT

Onslaught only worked on early Genesis systems: those sold from late 1991 included the TradeMark Security System which prevented it from booting. Ballistic had to drop the price and add a sticker informing customers.

THE OOZE

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega Technical Institute

RESEARCH SCIENTIST DR Caine discovers that the corporation he's working for has created a plague designed to wipe out humanity and is planning to use the cure to hold the world to ransom. Before he can do anything, he's captured by the evil Director, injected with chemicals and dumped into waste, but it doesn't kill him. Instead, he turns into a sentient blob of green ooze. It's up to Caine to slush around the corporation building's five large areas, punching and spitting at enemies, until he can find and destroy the Director. Along the way he can also collect DNA helices: you need to get all 50 for the good ending where he actually turns human again, otherwise he's doomed to be all blobby forever. ■

FACT

The Japanese version has a reversible cover. One side pretends the game is heavily censored, 18-only grindhouse grot, while the other pretends it's a classy romance novel.

OPERATION EUROPE: PATH TO VICTORY

Year 1993
Publisher Koei
Developer Koei

KOEI'S TAKE ON World War II follows a similar style to many of its other historical simulations, offering a variety of scenarios then letting you play them out in a turn-based fashion. There are six key WWII moments here: Occupation of France (1940), North African War (1942), Fierce Battle at Kursk (1943), Storming of Normandy (1944), Battle of the Bulge (1944–45) and Fight for Berlin (1945). Each scenario lets you play as either the Allies or the Axis, and lets you choose your commanders from a selection of actual historical figures: Eisenhower, De Gaulle, Stalin, Patton and, yes, even Hitler and Rommel. Each scenario has different victory conditions for each side: for Normandy, for example, the Allies have to defend or occupy either Caen, Bayeux or Saint-Lô. ■

FACT

The game comes with a poster featuring the cover art, so good luck explaining why you've got a picture of Rommel up on your wall.

THE OTTIFANTS

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Graftgold

THE OTTIFANTS WERE a creation of German comedian Otto Waalkes and were designed to be a sort of cartoon mascot. The 'Ottifanten' became so popular they spawned their own animated series, which is what this Europe-only release is based on. You play as Bruno, the baby Ottifant, as he tries to find his dad, who he thinks has been abducted by aliens (in reality he's just working late at the office). Bruno has to follow the trail of jellybeans that fell from his old man's pockets, in the hope that it will eventually reunite them. Bruno can jump on enemies' heads or fire jelly beans at them from his trunk. The aim is to collect a set number of candies in each stage before the exit opens. ■

FACT

Otto Waalkes' hometown of Emden in Germany has a bronze statue of two Ottifants kissing each other.

OUTBACK JOEY

Year 1993
Publisher HeartBeat
Developer HeartBeat

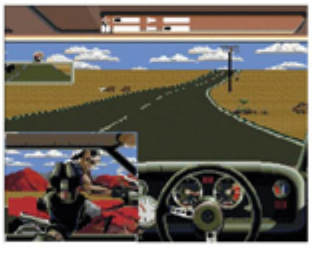
EASILY ONE OF the rarest games on the Genesis, Outback Joey was bundled with the HeartBeat Personal Trainer, a modified Genesis that came bundled with a motion sensor and a heart rate monitor that clipped to the player's ear. The game tells the story of Joey, a champion boxer kangaroo who has to rescue his girlfriend Matilda and his friends from an evil 'gourmand' poacher Gustave McGullet, who wants to make them the main course at his 'greasy spoon' restaurant (there's a lot of fat-shaming here, obviously). As Joey, the player has to run across the outback in search of mystic aborigines who can help in their quest: this is done by using exercise equipment (like a bike or treadmill), with the motion sensor tracking your movements and making Joey run accordingly. ■

FACT

Because Outback Joey is so rare and requires its controllers to be attached to work, it's one of the few Genesis games whose ROM image hasn't been preserved online (at the time of writing).

OUTLANDER

Year 1992
Publisher Mindscape
Developer Mindscape



INITIALLY INTENDED TO be a video game adaptation of the second Mad Max movie *The Road Warrior*, Mindscape lost the rights as development neared its end and so the game was hastily modified into this 'definitely not *The Road Warrior*, honest mate' adventure. It consists mainly of two different gameplay styles: the first of these are first-person driving sections where you speed across the wastelands gunning down enemy bikers (including a very cool touch where a side window view pops up when they pass you, letting you shoot them with a shotgun). The other sections are side-scrolling action levels where you wander through small towns, shooting bad guys while stealing loads of fuel and food in order to keep driving farther. A stylish game, if not without flaws. ■

FACT

If you want to effectively become invincible, getting a high score and entering your name as PSYCHOSLAPHEAD lets you restore your health whenever you like by pressing Start on controller 2.

OUTRUN

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Hertz

THERE ARE FEW Sega games more iconic than OutRun. Designed by the legendary Yu Suzuki, the game involves driving a red sports car (which is supposed to be a Ferrari Testarossa minus the official licence) through traffic-laden highways in an attempt to pass through five checkpoints and reach the final goal before the timer runs out. Although a 'complete' run involves passing through five stages, at the end of each checkpoint there's a fork in the road, with each direction leading to a different environment. Because of this, there are actually 15 different stages and five different goals to reach, making multiple playthroughs essential to see everything the game has to offer. The reason OutRun is so memorable to its fans is that every aspect is Sega at its best: idyllic scenery with bright blue skies, superb music by Hiroshi Miyauchi and a great sense of humour to boot (hit a roadside object at a high enough speed and your car will tumble through the air, dumping the driver and his attractive girlfriend on the road, rubbing their heads in disbelief). The Mega Drive version is a relatively faithful conversion, although it doesn't scale its track detail quite as well as the arcade version did and its frame rate is significantly lower. Despite these limitations, fans of the arcade game can adapt to the home version without too much trouble. ■

FACT

You get a special ending if you clear all five goals. If you can't be fussed with all that, though, you can simply clear a single checkpoint then enter ENDING as your name in the high score table.

OUTRUN 2019

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Hertz

OUTRUN 2019 WAS originally supposed to be a completely original IP called Junker's High until Sega let it use the OutRun name at the last minute. Set in the extremely futuristic year… um, 2019, it's similar to the original OutRun in that the aim is still to make your way to a goal by passing through checkpoints and avoiding traffic. This time, however, it's made up of four separate levels, each with their own sets of routes. There's also a new turbo feature, thanks to the hefty booster rocket strapped to the back of your car: it's similar to the boost in Turbo OutRun, but whereas that was user-controlled, here the turbo immediately kicks in once it's fully charged, letting you hit extremely fast speeds whether you want to or not. ■

FACT

Although there's no visible difference, the cars in the North American version technically run faster (682mph) than those in the European one (682km/h). This is likely just down to poor localisation.

OUTRUNNERS

Year 1994
Publisher Data East
Developer Sega

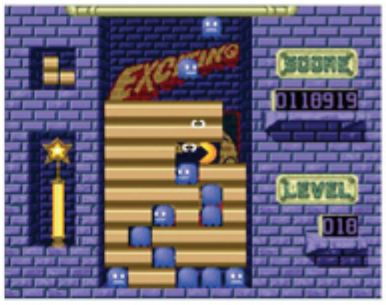
OUTRUNNERS ATTEMPTED TO build on OutRun by adding more of everything. Instead of your single Ferrari-like car you could now choose between eight different vehicles, and there was now double the number of goals: the first stage ended with a fork letting you choose either east or west, each leading to a completely different set of forks and stages. The aim here is now to race across the entire world, meaning stages include the likes of Niagara Falls, Switzerland, China and even the Mediterranean Sea. The Mega Drive version was criticised for looking far worse than the arcade version, but it did have its own quirks such as split-screen multiplayer and a new Original mode, where you could pick levels at will and race against CPU opponents. ■

FACT

The Japanese version of OutRunners has a cheat that lets you play as the car from Virtua Racing. The western version acknowledges when the cheat has been entered, but the car doesn't appear.

PAC-ATTACK

Year 1993
Publisher Namco
Developer Namco



PAC-ATTACK, KNOWN AS Pac-Panic in Europe, is a puzzle game starring everyone's favourite smiley yellow blob that isn't an emoji. At first glance, it looks just like Tetris and its basic mechanics are very similar: drop blocks of varying shapes into a well, and if you can form a complete line it'll disappear. Where things are different is that some of these blocks have been replaced by ghosts, and they if appear in a line it doesn't count (it has to be a complete line of standard blocks). That's where the Pac-Man block comes into play: drop this and Pac-Man will move sideways and downwards, eating any ghosts in his way until he hits a dead end. By lining up ghosts to create a path for Pac-Man to follow, players can create large combos. ■

FACT

Namco had originally planned to call the game Pac-Tris and had even registered a trademark under that name. Presumably it got cold feet and decided not to stir up trouble.

PAC-MAN 2: THE NEW ADVENTURES

Year 1994
Publisher Namco
Developer Namco

NAMCO'S ATTEMPT TO make Pac-Man relevant again to '90s gamers was this strange attempt at a point-and-click style adventure where gamers aren't directly in control of Pac-Man but are instead armed with a slingshot that they can use to manipulate the environment and make Pac-Man react accordingly. There are five 'episodes', most of which see Pac-Man heading out to fetch something for a family member: milk for Pac-Baby, Pac-Jr's guitar and the like. Each consists of a series of what are essentially trial-and-error situations, where the player must fire their catapult at various things to see how it affects the situation. Pac-Man's mood can also have an effect: sometimes you may need to deliberately hit him to get him angry or sad and make a situation play out differently. ■

FACT

The SNES version contained a hidden version of Ms Pac-Man. Since there was already a Ms Pac-Man port on the Genesis, it was replaced with Pac-Jr (not a port of Jr Pac-Man but a modified Ms Pac-Man).

PAC-MANIA

Year 1991
Publisher Tengen
Developer Sculptured Software

NAMCO ORIGINALLY RELEASED Pac-Mania in arcades in 1987, but it couldn't escape Tengen's port-mania forever. It's a pseudo-3D remake of Pac-Man presented with an isometric viewpoint, and the stages take place over four different environments: Block Town, Pac-Man's Park, Sandbox Land and Jungly Steps. The general concept is the same – eat all the dots – but this time Pac-Man has the ability to jump over ghosts, as well as trigger a speed boost whenever he likes. To make things trickier, then, the game introduces extra ghosts: joining the usual quarter of Inky, Blinky, Pinky and Clyde is a new purple ghost called Sue, and later in the game you also meet Funky (light green) and Spunky (black), both of whom can also jump and hit you mid-air. ■

FACT

The Japanese promotional art for the arcade version got Blinky and Clyde's names mixed up. For the avoidance of doubt, they're supposed to be red and orange respectively.

THE PAGEMASTER

Year 1994
Publisher Fox Interactive
Developer Probe Software

THE PAGEMASTER WAS an animated movie starring Macaulay Culkin that bombed hard but had its video game movie tie-in released anyway. You play as Culkin's character, Richard, as he makes his way through a series of stages based on three literary genres: Horror, Adventure and Fantasy. The aim is to rescue each of his three book friends named after said genres, in order to escape the animated realm and enter the real world. Along the way there are eight hidden library cards, which all have to be collected to get the 'good' ending. There are also bonus stages where you fly on a giant book: these are third-person in nature and presented in a 3D style similar to games like Space Harrier. ■

FACT

Frankenstein's monster is in the game, and was also seen in trailers and TV ads for the movie. He doesn't actually appear in the final film, though.

PAPERBOY

Year 1992
Publisher Tengen
Developer Motivetime

THIS ARCADE CLASSIC has you playing as a young lad trying to earn some extra cash by delivering newspapers. The problem is, the street he's been assigned to is one of the most dangerous, crazy streets in America, meaning the paperboy has to make sure to avoid the likes of breakdancers, tornadoes, skateboarders, tricycles and even the Grim Reaper while trying to do his job.

Only some of the houses on the street are subscribers: you have to make sure you accurately throw a newspaper at either their letterbox or their doorstep to keep them happy, or risk them cancelling their subscription. As for the non-subscribers? Smash their windows, wreck their garden ornaments, do whatever you want for bonus points and they may just be 'encouraged' to subscribe. ■

FACT

A mobile version called Paperboy: Special Delivery was released in 2010. It included a story mode where Paperboy eventually falls in love and starts throwing roses instead of papers.

PAPERBOY 2

Year 1993
Publisher Tengen
Developer Tengen

THE HOME VERSIONS of Paperboy renewed enough interest in the game that it encouraged Tengen to make a sequel. At its core it's the same idea as its predecessor, but it's got a number of new additions to mix things up slightly. For starters, you're now delivering to both sides of the street, meaning you now have to throw left and right, and have to cross a dangerous road at times. If you can complete a week, you'll also earn promotion to new routes with fancier houses and special locations like gas stations, markets, carnivals and malls. You even have the option to play as either a paperboy or a papergirl now, because girls are more than capable of launching a *Daily Mail* through a subscriber's window too. ■

FACT

There are set-piece events that can get you in the paper itself if you get involved: these include stopping a bank robbery by hitting the robber, or hitting a runaway pram to stop it and save the baby.

PAT RILEY BASKETBALL

Year 1990
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

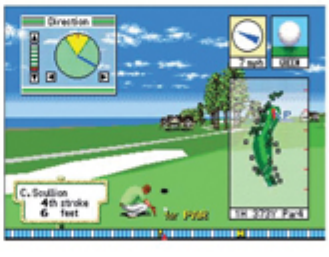
THIS EARLY MEGA Drive basketball game was originally called Super Real Basketball in Japan (and later given the same name in Europe) but was renamed in America to tie in with Pat Riley, who had won the NBA Championships four times as the head coach of the LA Lakers. Riley doesn't really have anything to do with the game, which contains eight fictional teams – the Boston Bashers, Dallas Wings, Denver Jammers, LA Hoops, New York Busters, Houston Rebels, Seattle Bears and Detroit Jets – and offers either exhibition games or a knockout tournament. Its unique gimmick was its dunking mechanic: get close enough to the basket and shoot and the game will cut to a dramatic close-up cutscene where you have to time a button press to dunk the ball. ■

FACT

We should all think ourselves lucky that Sega dodn't keep the North American working title of Pat Riley's Slammin' and Jammin' Basketball.

PEBBLE BEACH GOLF LINKS

Year 1994
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer T&E Soft



TO FURTHER BOOST its library of sports games, Sega teamed up with Japanese studio T&E Soft for an officially licensed golf title based on the Pebble Beach Golf Links, regularly the highest rated public golf course in America and the site of the 1992 US Open. There are five different ways to play the course: Stroke Play, Match Play, a Skins Game, practicing a single hole, or taking part in a full tournament with 48 golfers. A battery back-up saves your lifetime stats like your best scores, longest drives and so on, and other features include advice from your caddie and instant replays. This doesn't distract from the fact that the game's main selling point is also its weakness, in that there are only 18 holes in total here. ■

FACT

T&E Soft originally referred to the founder's brothers Toshiro and Eiji Yokoyama, but later was changed to mean Tri & Exciting, then Technology & Entertainment. It never meant ToeJam & Earl.

PELÉ!

Year 1993
Publisher Accolade
Developer Radical Entertainment

'THE GREATEST NAME in football is now the greatest name in football games.' So declares the European box for Pelé!, Accolade's attempt at recreating the beautiful game in 16-bit form. Maybe it was worded wrongly and meant to say 'the greatest name on a football game', because the game itself was generally agreed to be one of the worst renditions of the sport ever, with UK magazine *Mega* giving it 12 per cent. It includes 40 fictional club teams from around the world, all of which are just arbitrarily named after cities (Sydney, Cairo, Khartoum). Once you get onto the pitch things get confusing quickly, as your players' movements don't seem to correspond with the buttons you're pressing, while your AI opponents seemingly have no issues at all. ■

FACT

According to Australian magazine *Hyper*, Sega decided not to release the game in that region because it was so awful.

PELÉ II: WORLD TOURNAMENT SOCCER

Year 1994
Publisher Sport Accolade
Developer Radical Entertainment

IT MAY NOT be FIFA or Sensible Soccer, but Pelé II at least banished the spectre of its predecessor by completely revamping its controls and actually offering a reasonable football game as a result. This time, instead of revolving around club teams, Pelé II positions itself as an unofficial combination to the 1994 USA World Cup, including all 24 nations who qualified for the tournament (which, yes, means you can't play as England or Scotland in it). Its unofficial nature does mean the player names are completely fictional, but some of them are hilariously so: Ireland has a right-back called Brian O'Brien while the Netherlands have the brilliantly named Cornelius Tenbosch playing for them. Not a classic, then, but a massive improvement. ■

FACT

The game claims to have 'new player logic based on strategies and plays of Pelé', but I don't remember him ever running around like a headless chicken.

PETE SAMPRAS TENNIS

Year 1994
Publisher Sportsmaster
Developer Codemasters

CODEMASTERS' FORAY INTO the world of tennis video games involved signing up the rights to use Pete Sampras, who at the time was the number 1 ranked male tennis player in the world. A good start, then. There are 32 different male and female tennis players to choose from in the game, but Sampras is the only one who's real. There are also 33 courts from around the world, though they all fall into grass, hard and clay categories. Much like Codemasters' Micro Machines games, some versions of Pete Sampra Tennis came as a special J-Cart, where two extra controller ports were added to the cartridge itself, allowing four players to play a doubles match without having to buy a multiplayer adaptor. ■

FACT

If you enter ZEPPELIN as a password you'll unlock a mode called Crazy Tennis, where you can get power-ups that make the ball bigger, racquets appear on the net, and there's also a cameo by Codemasters' Dizzy.

PGA EUROPEAN TOUR

Year 1994
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Polygames

THIS SPIN-OFF OF the main PGA Tour Golf series focuses, somewhat unsurprisingly, on European courses. There are five tournaments and courses in total: the Canon European Masters at Crans-sur-Sierre in Switzerland, the English Open at the Forest of Arden Hotel, the Peugeot Open de France at Le Golf National, the Volvo Masters at Valderrama in Spain and the Volvo PGA Championship at Wentworth Club in England. The real-life pros who usually feature in the main series have all been replaced with a new set of non-American golfers too, including the likes of Seve Ballesteros, Colin Montgomerie, Ian Woosnam, Sandy Lyle and Bernhard Langer. As in the other games at the time, though, you can't play as these pros: you can only compete against them. ■

FACT

The PGA European Tour started in 1972. At the time of writing Seve Ballesteros has the most tournament wins (50), while Colin Montgomerie won Golfer of the Year most times: four in total.

PGA TOUR GOLF

Year 1991
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Sterling Silver Software

THE FIRST GAME in the PGA Tour Golf series made a huge impact on home computers, and enjoyed similar success on the Mega Drive the following year. There are three officially licensed courses to play on – TPC Sawgrass in Florida, TPC Avenel in Potomac and the PGA West Stadium Course in La Quinta – as well as a fantasy course called Sterling Shores. There are 60 real-life professionals whose names appear in the leaderboards during tournaments, but 10 of them (including the likes of Fred Couples, Mark O'Meara, Fuzzy Zoeller and Craig Stadler) are given elite status, and appear during the (visually impressive but extremely slow) flybys for each hole to give you advice on how to master it. ■

FACT

The PGA Tour was founded in 1929 and organises most of the main professional men's golf tours in North America. Tiger Woods has won the PGA Player of the Year award a record 11 times.

PGA TOUR GOLF II

Year 1993
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Polygames

THE SECOND PGA Tour game adopted the new EA Sports branding and offered general upgrades across the board. The number of courses had increased from four to seven: joining Sawgrass, Avenel, the PGA West Stadium Course and Sterling Shores from the last game were TPC Southwind in Memphis, TPC Eagle Trace in Florida and TPC Scottsdale in Arizona. Other new additions included the ability to control draw and fade, a 'skins' contest format and a new feature called Hole Browser, where players can control the hole flybys themselves. The 10 featured pros are the same as in the first game, but this time instead of just getting advice from them you can actually play against them, with the AI controlling them in certain modes. ■

FACT

The 16th hole on TPC Scottsdale is fully enclosed by a grandstand that holds 20,000 spectators. It's said to be the noisiest, rowdiest hole on the entire PGA Tour.

PGA TOUR GOLF III

Year 1994
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Polygames

EA'S THIRD PGA Tour game was exclusive to the Mega Drive. There were now eight real-life courses to choose from: Sawgrass, Avenel, Scottsdale and Southwind returned, and joining them for the first time were TPC Summerlin in Las Vegas, TPC River Highlands in Connecticut, TPC Las Colinas in Texas and TPC at The Woodlands, also in Texas. The major new gameplay addition was a new ball cursor which let players choose exactly where they ideally wanted to make contact with the ball, in order to precisely control draw, fade, arc and spin. The other main improvement was a complete revamp in the player sprites, which were now fully digitised. This meant the 10 real players now looked exactly like they did in real life, signature swing animations and all. ■

FACT

There were a total of 23 games in EA's main PGA Tour Golf series, including the Tiger Woods PGA Tour games and the final entry, Rory McIlroy PGA Tour. 2K Sports took over the licence with PGA Tour 2K21.

PGA TOUR 96

Year 1995
Publisher EA Sports
Developer NuFX / Hitmen Productions

THE 1996 EDITION of PGA Tour Golf was the series' first massive overhaul, and the Mega Drive struggled to cope with it. EA was very much focused on the shiny new PlayStation and 3DO versions, but rather than do a 'legacy edition' like it had done with its NBA, NHL and Madden games EA tried to make the Mega Drive version match the others. This meant 3D-modelled courses on a console that couldn't really handle them, which meant they took a lifetime to load every time you hit the ball. The new attention to course detail also meant there were only three courses to play on: Spyglass Hill, Sawgrass and River Highlands. Not even the ability to finally play as a pro (instead of against them) made up for the frustration. ■

FACT

The Spyglass Hill course was named after Treasure Island, and each of its 18 holes are named after characters and places from the book (Jim Hawins, Tom Morgan, Skeleton Island etc).

PHANTASY STAR II

Year 1990
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

AS ONE OF the first RPGs released on the Mega Drive, Phantasy Star II was as influential for the genre on Sega's console as Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest were on the Famicom/NES. A sequel to the first Master System Phantasy Star, it follows a government agent called Rolf as he and his friend Nei try to figure out why the Mother Brain, which protects all life on the planet Mota, has allowed evil to infect the world's flora, fauna and technology. Since the RPG genre was still fairly new to western console gamers, the North American and European versions of Phantasy Star II came with a huge 116-page guide book that showed maps of every dungeon and essentially told players what to do next. ■

FACT

The piano teacher Ustvestia is gay in the Japanese version, stating that male party members 'look cute' and charging them less for music lessons. This was changed to 'he looks smart' in the western release.

PHANTASY STAR III: GENERATIONS OF DOOM

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

THE THIRD PHANTASY Star game was something of an outlier because its plot didn't really have anything to do with the events of the other games in the series. You play as Rhys, a prince who has to rescue his bride-to-be Maia, who was kidnapped by a dragon during the wedding ceremony (which, to be fair, probably isn't a good omen). The game's main gimmick is that it takes place over three generations: at the end of the first the player has to choose which of two women to marry, and the next generation begins with you playing as their child. This happens again at the end of the second generation, meaning there are ultimately four different endings (though they don't differ too much: take that, butterfly effect). ■

FACT

If you sell your boots and buy an Escapipe right at the start of the game, you can instantly escape when the King throws you in the dungeon. The king then applauds you for being clever but tells you to reset the game.

PHANTASY STAR IV: THE END OF THE MILLENNIUM

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

THE FOURTH AND final entry in the traditional Phantasy Star series (before Sega revived it as Phantasy Star Online years down the line). After going with a completely unrelated storyline in the third game Phantasy Star IV returns to its roots, setting its plot 1,000 years after the events of Phantasy Star II. The planet of Motavia (formerly Mota) is becoming an arid desert, so playing as a young hunter called Chaz you have to find out what's going on, ultimately coming up against the evil magician Zio, who wants to destroy the entire solar system. While most of the game plays similarly to its predecessors, the introduction of new combo techniques means if two characters perform certain spells in a row a new, more powerful spell will be cast. ■

FACT

A glitch means that if any character reaches level 99 their stats are reduced and some of their attacks are removed. This was fixed for the Wii Virtual Console release in 2008.

PHANTOM 2040

Year 1995
Publisher Viacom New Media
Developer Illusions

AFTER DISCOVERING THAT he's the 24th in a line of masked heroes called the Phantom who are destined to protect the Earth from evil and corruption, college student Kit Walker Jr finds himself up against biotech firm Maximum Inc., who aim to take over the world by making certain animal species extinct and disrupting the balance of the ecosystem. Cue a Metroidvania style game based on the *Phantom 2040* animated series, in which players are armed with a wave gun and an 'inductance rope' (which lets him grapple on ledges), and eventually gain access to a bunch of other weapons and tools such as homing missiles, boomerangs and special pellets that can be thrown at fires to extinguish them. There are 20 different possible endings. ■

FACT

Rebecca Madison, the evil chair of Maximum Inc., was voiced in the animated series by Margot Kidder, better known as Lois Lane in the Christopher Reeve era Superman films.

PHELIOS

Year 1990
Publisher Namco
Developer Namco

APOLLO, GOD OF the sun, is a tad upset. His love, moon goddess Artemis, has been kidnapped by the ruler of darkness, the beast-god Typhon. In order to rescue her from Typhon's Temple, Apollo has to mount his flying horse Pegasus and ride it through seven stages, using the magical sword Phelios to fire at enemies along the way. Many of the game's bosses are also taken from Greek mythology, such as the snake-headed Medusa, the multi-headed dog Cerberus and the Graeae, the three sisters who share one eye between them. Although Phelios is a fairly straightforward shoot 'em up on paper – with typical power-ups like speed boosts, homing bullets and extra 'option' shots – its unique mythical Greek theme makes it a memorable one nonetheless. ■

FACT

Despite what the game claims, in proper Greek mythology Artemis and Apollo were actually brother and sister, not lovers.

PINK GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

Year 1993
Publisher TecMagik
Developer Headgames / Manley & Associates

THE PINK PANTHER wants to be a movie star, so he heads to Hollywood to audition for a big role. The problem is, he can't help causing havoc on all the MGM Studio lots. As the angry Inspector Clouseau gives chase, ol' Pinky has to make his way through seven stages, each with terrible pun names: Pinkin Hood, Cat on a Hot Pink Roof, Pink Beard, Jungle Pink, Pink Ranger (which is supposed to be the Lone Ranger), Polterpink and Pinkenstein. Each of these levels is connected by a central hub stage called Honey I Shrunk the Pink, which sounds extremely rude but is just an oversized house. Along the way you can visit toll booths to make bridges, umbrellas and magic carpets appear to help you reach inaccessible areas. ■

FACT

The actual Pink Panther – from the 1963 movie whose opening credits featured the animated version – was a pink diamond with an imperfection on it in the shape of a panther.

PINOCCHIO

Year 1996
Publisher THQ / Disney Interactive
Developer Virgin Studios London

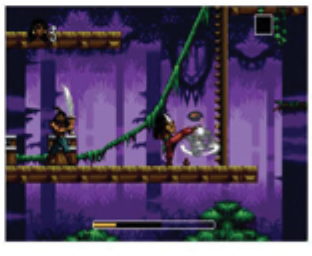
THE FOURTH OF Virgin's Disney platformers, many gamers don't even realise Pinocchio existed because it arrived so late in the Mega Drive's life. As you'd expect, it follows the events of Disney's 1940 classic, including helping Pinocchio make his way to school without being tempted by bad guys, perform at the marionette show, navigate the rickety roller coasters of Pleasure Island and eventually rescue Geppetto from inside Monstro the whale's stomach by collecting firewood and lighting a fire to make it sneeze you both into the sea. Visually, it met the same high standards as the Aladdin, Lion King and Jungle Book games: once again, development involved collaboration with Disney's own animators, with Virgin creating rough sketches and Disney then interpreting them in their own way. ■

FACT

A planned 32X version was scrapped. Disney also chose not to allow a Saturn version because it wanted to make its own games for the polygonal consoles, starting with Pocahontas (which was also scrapped).

THE PIRATES OF DARK WATER

Year 1994
Publisher Sunsoft
Developer Iguana Entertainment



MOST CARTOONS ARE lucky to get one video game tie-in, but Hanna-Barbera's short-lived series *The Pirates of Dark Water* got two completely different games on the SNES and Mega Drive. While the Nintendo version was a beat 'em up, Sega owners were instead given an action platformer where players could choose between three heroes – leader Ren, spirited warrior Tula and former pirate Ioz – as they try to find the Treasures of Rule to restore their island of Mer to its former glory and remove the dangerous patches of dark water floating around it. As you explore each stage (the game is non-linear so you can take them on in any order) you'll be able to collect potions that let you jump further, freeze enemies, gain invincibility or generate a protective forcefield. ■

FACT

The show was cancelled when only eight of the 13 Treasures of Rule had been found. The Mega Drive game, then, provides an ending to the story that the cartoon didn't deliver.

PIRATES! GOLD

Year 1993
Publisher MicroProse
Developer MicroProse

THIS REMAKE OF Sid Meier's Pirates! gives the 1987 home computer classic a visual revamp to bring it yarring and harring into the '90s. Starting off in command of a tiny ship with a small crew, your only goal is to eventually retire rich and famous. The twist is that there's no set way to do this: you can choose what method you want to use to gain your notoriety, be that pillaging towns, looking for buried treasure, sailing the seas and plundering other ships, or even keeping your hands clean and setting up a legit trading business. If you fancy something more structured you can take part in short scenarios that recreate famous expeditions by the likes of John Hawkins, Francis Drake, Piet Heyn and Henry Morgan. ■

FACT

Sid Meier co-founded MicroProse in 1982. After finding success with Pirates! (the first game with his name in the title), he found even more with the groundbreaking Civilization.

PIT-FIGHTER

Year 1991
Publisher Tengen
Developer Sterling Silver Software

MORTAL KOMBAT? PAH. NBA Jam? Ptooey. Pit-Fighter was digitising real people long before those games existed. Originally released in the arcades by Atari in 1990, Pit-Fighter is a one-on-one fighting game where players can move around in all directions. Choosing between three different characters – meathead wrestler Buzz, speedy kickboxer Ty or all-rounder black belt Kato – you have to beat up eight different opponents in a variety of 'pits' located in the likes of warehouses, subway stations, bars and freeway overpasses. You can use any weapons you find: sticks, barrels, beer kegs, you name it, it's legal. Don't try to escape, though: the crowd don't like that and have no problem pushing you back into the fight so the beatdown can continue. ■

FACT

Some of the opponents were named after the real-life people who played them: Southside Jim was played by James Thompson, Angel was Angela Stellato and Mad Miles was Miles McGowan.

PITFALL: THE MAYAN ADVENTURE

Year 1994
Publisher Activision
Developer Redline Games

THE LEGENDARY EXPLORER Pitfall Harry is being held prisoner by the spirit of an evil Mayan warrior called Zakelua. It's not an ideal situation when all's said and done, but at least his son Pitfall Harry Jr isn't too far. It's up to Jr – armed with little more than a sling and a sense of adventure – to make his way through the dangerous jungles in search of his old man. This spiritual successor to Activision's classic Atari 2600 game Pitfall was greatly praised for its impressive character animation, which involved a collaboration with Kroyer Films (who were responsible for *FernGully: The Last Rainforest*). There's a near-perfect port of the original Pitfall hidden in the game: press Down, then the A button 26 times(!) then Down again to get it. ■

FACT

When the original Pitfall Harry finally appears at the end of the game, he still looks like his extremely basic Atari 2600 sprite.

POCAHONTAS

Year 1996
Publisher Disney Interactive
Developer Funcom

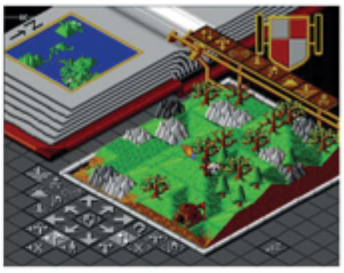
MUCH LIKE PINOCCHIO, Pocahontas is another Disney game that came and went unnoticed by many because all eyes were on next-gen systems by that point. It's a shame, because rather than another action platformer like the Virgin Disney games before it, it's instead an interesting puzzle platformer where players control both Pocahontas and her raccoon pal Meeko, switching between them at the touch of a button. As Pocahontas helps out various animals who are in trouble, their spirits enters her and she unlocks new abilities: free a horse early on, for example, and she'll learn to sprint, whereas helping a family of otters reunite gives her the ability to dive and swim in water. Arguably one of the Mega Drive's hidden gems. ■

FACT

The real Pocahontas was called Matoaka and was only 10 or 11 when John Smith arrived. There's no proof they fell in love, or that she saved his life. Don't treat the film as a biography, basically.

POPULOUS

Year 1990
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Bullfrog Productions



PETER MOLYNEUX'S POPULOUS is considered by many to be the first ever 'God' game. You play as a supreme being with the power to shape worlds. At first you only have the power to raise and lower land, to make flat areas for your small legion of followers to create settlements. Over time they'll grow crops and bigger settlements until you gain the power to move your Papal Magnet to elsewhere in the land, guiding them to build more settlements elsewhere. The problem is, there are also evil people in the world, meaning you need to build enough power to devastate them with natural disasters like earthquakes, volcanoes and floods. Weaken the evil side enough and you can declare Armageddon, where both good and bad meet for a big fight. ■

FACT

In 2013 Molyneux released the early access version of Godus, his spiritual successor to Populous. How was it? Well… look, at least we've still got Populous.

POWER DRIVE

Year 1995
Publisher US Gold
Developer Rage Software

THIS RALLY RACING game is played from an overhead perspective and lets you race across 48 stages set across eight locations: Monte Carlo, Kenya, Sweden, Corsica, Arizona, Finland, Australia and Great Britain. There are three different track types – gravel, asphalt or sand, depending on the region – and at times you'll be expected to race through the rain, snow or even at night. The aim is to take part in a series of Special Stages (which are time trials), Rally Cross races (where you go head-to-head against CPU drivers) and Skill Tests (where you have to complete specially designed courses without incurring a penalty. Along the way you'll collect funds which can either be used to repair your car or saved up until you can afford a better one. ■

FACT

Power Drive is one of the handful of Europe-only Mega Drive releases that were converted to 60Hz and made available for download through the Sega Channel service in North America.

POWERMONGER

Year 1993
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Bullfrog Productions

AFTER POPULOUS LAUNCHED, Peter Molyneux got to work on a successor that used a basic polygonal map instead of an isometric, sprite-based one. Although it's similar in nature to Populous, Powermonger isn't strictly speaking a God game this time. Instead of playing as a deity, you're a king whose previous kingdom was destroyed by a huge storm and now you find yourself on the shores of a foreign land with a small group of followers. As in Populous, the land here is also populated by other factions, so once again you have to grow your resources and slowly dominate until you reach your aim, which this time is to get from the north-west corner of the map to the south-east corner. ■

FACT

There were a bunch of expansion packs planned for the home computer version that would have given the game a fantasy, Feudal Japan or American Civil War theme. Only a WWI one was released.

POWERBALL

Year 1991
Publisher Namco
Developer Namco

WHAT DO YOU get if you combine American football, rugby and football, and put all the players in big metallic suits? If you answered 'Powerball', stop cheating by reading the title. This Genesis exclusive from Namco has eight teams to choose from – the UK, USA, USSR, China, Japan, Korea, Brazil and Greece – and has players trying to get a ball from one end of the field to the other by any means necessary, even if that means fighting or wrestling moves. The football / American football hybrid theme even extends to the rules because there are two ways to score: either by kicking the ball into a goal (which scores one point) or running it into an endzone (which scores three). It's similar to Speedball 2. ■

FACT

The Japanese title is Wrestleball, which probably feels more appropriate.

PREDATOR 2

Year 1992
Publisher Arena Entertainment
Developer Teeny Weeny Games

THE SECOND PREDATOR movie took the iconic horror alien out of the jungle and dumped it in the streets of Los Angeles, where it decided to get involved in a turf war between Colombian and Jamaican drug cartels because why not. This Mega Drive tie-in puts players into the department issued boots of Lieutenant Harrigan (played by Danny Glover in the movie) as he makes his way through the streets, the rooftops, the subway, a slaughterhouse and even the Predator's ship, gunning down gang leaders while occasionally facing off against the Predator itself. You have to find and free a certain number of hostages on each stage before the exit will appear, otherwise they'll become the Predator's trophies. And you don't want to see where he engraves them. ■

FACT

The game's credits simply list the programmer as '?' but its code has a hidden message that reveals that the programmer was Paul Shirley. It's not clear why it was hidden like this.

PREMIER MANAGER

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Gremlin Interactive

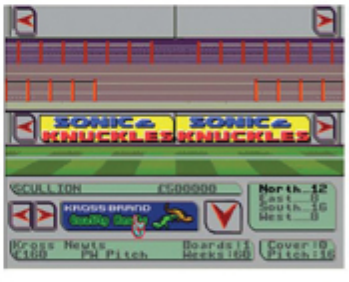
WHILE CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER (later rebranded Football Manager) was the undoubted king of football management games on home computers, Gremlin Interactive's Premier Manager games got their fair share of praise too. This Mega Drive version is actually based on Premier Manager 2, and lets players choose a team from the Football League Third Division and try to take them all the way up to the Premier League. Although it's technically a management sim you get to control a lot of other aspects that a football manager wouldn't usually be expected to do, such as upgrading the stadium, managing the club's bank loan and even arranging deals for advertising hoardings. During matches, the action is text-only with a scoreboard that shows preset animations during goals and other key incidents. ■

FACT

Some of the game's youth players (like Atkinson, Casson and Lister) are named after members of the development team.

PREMIER MANAGER 97

Year 1996
Publisher Sega
Developer Gremlin Interactive



YOU'D THINK THAT a sequel would be an opportunity to add some new features, maybe fix some things that didn't quite work so well the last time around and generally provide an experience that's improved enough to encourage fans to make the step to the next edition. It would appear that this concept was alien to the team behind Premier Manager 97, which is extremely similar to the previous Premier Manager game on the Mega Drive, with the obvious exception of the teams and players being based on the 1996–97 season rather than the 1995–96 one. Not even the game's packaging has been spared this: half the blurb on the back of the box is word-for-word the same as the previous game's. ■

FACT

The 2005 PC version of Premier Manager was banned by the Chinese Ministry of Culture because it considered places like Tibet and Hong Kong separate states.

PRIMAL RAGE

Year 1995
Publisher Time Warner Interactive
Developer Probe Entertainment

LET'S FACE IT, you haven't seen everything the fighting game genre has to offer until you've played one where all the characters are stop-motion dinosaurs. Set in the future after a meteor hits the Earth and turns it into the post-apocalyptic 'Urth', players choose between seven different prehistoric gods – from the giant ape-like Blizzard and Chaos to the T-Rex style Diablo and Sauron – and must defeat all the others in order to become Urth's new ruler. Released on 25 August 1995, which was dubbed Primal Rage Day by marketers, the Mega Drive port plays well enough (even retaining the controversial 'golden shower' move the SNES version was lacking) but its combo system is far more primitive than the arcade version's and the sprites have been scaled down significantly. ■

FACT

Press Left, Up, Right, Right, Up, Left, Right, Right, Left, Left, Up on the main menu to unlock a cheat menu which, among other things, lets you play a bowling mini-game where the tiny humans are pins.

PRIME TIME NFL FOOTBALL STARRING DEION SANDERS

Year 1995
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer Spectacular Games

GIVEN THAT THE game released before this in Sega's NFL series was NFL 95 and the one after it was the Saturn-only NFL 97, there's a pretty obvious title this game could have probably had instead. Still, Prime Time it was, and with the change of name came a change of cover star: having featured Joe Montana on the cover of its previous four American football games, Sega decided it was now time for Deion Sanders to get the glory as 'the ultimate free agent' (even though he'd moved to the Dallas Cowboys just a couple of months before launch). Other than the introduction of the two expansion teams, the Carolina Panthers and the Jackson Jaguars, critics found that Prime Time NFL wasn't massively different from NFL 95. ■

FACT

Not only did Deion Sanders play in the NFL for 14 seasons, he also played baseball in the MLB for nine. He's the only person to have played in a Super Bowl (winning two) and a World Series.

PRINCE OF PERSIA

Year 1994
Publisher Tengen / Domark
Developer Domark

THE EVIL GRAND Vizier Jaffar has seized power while the Sultan is fighting a war. The only thing in Jaffar's way is a young adventurer who's set to wed the Sultan's daughter, so Jaffar has him arrested and sent to the castle's dungeon. As the adventurer, you've got an hour to escape the dungeon and work your way up to the top of the palace tower, or else Jaffar will force the princess to either marry him or die. Prince of Persia was famous for its rotoscoped characters (in which sprites were drawn over actual filmed footage to create realistic animations). These animations affect the responsiveness of the controls, but the game uses this to its benefit, making the challenge just as much about navigating the dungeon as it is fighting Jaffar's guards. ■

FACT

A prototype of an unreleased Mega Drive version of Prince of Persia 2 exists, which is said to be more faithful to the PC version than the SNES port (which was released).

PRO QUARTERBACK

Year 1992
Publisher Tradewest
Developer Leland Interactive Media

TRADEWEST'S TAKE ON American football meets the bare minimum requirements expected of a game in its particular genre but really doesn't offer much else on top of that. All 28 teams are present, but there are no official team or player licenses, meaning you've got the likes of New York I and New York II in there instead of the Giants and Jets. There are six types of surface to play on – grass, artificial, mud, dirt, snow and rain – and that's about it: you can only play exhibition games, there are no season or playoffs modes. Add to this the strangely low viewpoint and the even lower frame rate and the result is one of the most underwhelming American football games on the Genesis. ■

FACT

The Leland Corporation (later Leland Interactive Media) formed when Tradewest bought another company called Cinematronics and renamed it after its co-founder Leland Cook.

PSYCHO PINBALL

Year 1994
Publisher Codemasters
Developer Codemasters

CODEMASTERS RELEASED THIS Mega Drive pinball game exclusively in Europe, to a great deal of critical acclaim. There are four themed tables to choose from, all of which are completely original: Wild West (which has a western theme, obviously), Trick or Treat (which is based on Halloween), The Abyss (which is set underwater) and Psycho (which is set in a theme park). Although it plays a solid enough game of pinball as it is, Psycho Pinball's most notable feature is its series of mini-games which are triggered when you hit certain points on each table. Starring the game's mascot Psycho, these include throwing crabs at a whale's ulcers so he'll spit you out, and making your way across the top of a runaway train. ■

FACT

GameTek published a US magazine ad stating that a bunch of Codemasters games including Psycho Pinball were coming to the States. Obviously this fell through.

P.T.O. PACIFIC THEATER OF OPERATIONS

Year 1992
Publisher Koei
Developer Koei

THIS IS YET another historical simulation from Koei, this time focused on World War II. Whereas its other WWII title Operation Europe focused more on events that took place in European conflicts, here – as the title suggests – the focus is more on the conflict that took place between America and Japan (and their allies) in the Pacific Ocean theatre. There are nine scenarios to choose from, most of which focus on specific battles like the attack on Pearl Harbour, the Okinawa offensive and the battle at Midway. If you're looking for something a little longer, the first scenario – entitled Negotiations Breakdown – is a four-year epic that starts in 1941 and runs to the end of the war. ■

FACT

It's possible to massively rewrite history in this game if your diplomatic skills aren't up to scratch. Get on Britain's bad side, for example, and it'll ditch the Allied forces and take its ships with it.

PUGGSY

Year 1993
Publisher Psygnosis
Developer Traveller's Tales

AN EARLY GAME by acclaimed British studio Traveller's Tales, Puggsy is a puzzle platformer starring an orange alien who's stuck on a foreign planet 15 light-years from his home space station. Even worse, his spaceship has been stolen, so he's going to have to get it back before he can think about getting back home. Although at first glance Puggsy seems to be a standard platform game it also boasts what was branded the Total Object Interaction system, which means Puggsy can pick up one of 40 different objects, carry them around and use them if needed. While some are straightforward enough – pick up a pair of sneakers and you can put them on to run faster – other objects have to be placed in certain locations to progress. ■

FACT

If the game detects that it's a bootleg, a message appears after a while saying: 'OK, that's all the levels of Puggsy you're allowed to play. Now go and play a cartridge version of the game instead of this silly copy.'

THE PUNISHER

Year 1995
Publisher Capcom
Developer Sculptured Software

THE PUNISHER WAS a 1993 Capcom arcade game based on the exceptionally violent Marvel comic hero of the same name. This port doesn't quite manage to match the arcade version due to the Mega Drive's relative lack of power but despite this is still an entertaining beat 'em up in its own right. Playing as either the Punisher himself or Nick Fury (the game also has a two-player co-op mode), you have to slaughter your way through six stages as you investigate a lead on a mob front that may lead to the notorious crime lord, the Kingpin. It's standard beat 'em up fare with a variety of weapons to pick up and use along the way, including M-16s, Uzis, baseball bats, hammers and even flamethrowers and throwing stars. ■

FACT

Although the Mega Drive version retains most of the arcade game's violence, some other aspects have still been censored. The female fighters' clothing is less skimpy, and the Kingpin doesn't smoke a cigar.

QUACKSHOT STARRING DONALD DUCK

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

AFTER WOWING MICKEY Mouse fans with Castle of Illusion, Sega followed up with a game starring Disney's other most-loved classic character, Donald Duck. The story revolves around a partial map found in Scrooge McDuck's library, which is said to lead to the treasure of King Garuzia, ruler of the Great Duck Kingdom. Donald has to travel back and forth between Duckburg, Mexico, Transylvania, India, Egypt and the South Pole, collecting objects that will slowly help him find the other pieces of the map and locate the treasure. He's armed with a plunger gun: while at first it fires standard plungers that stun enemies, eventually it can be upgraded with sticky plungers (which stick to walls as platforms), and bubblegum ammo which can break some walls. ■

FACT

Director Emiko Yamamoto, artist Takashi Yuda and composer Tokuhiko Uwabo worked on both Castle of Illusion and Quackshot, so Donald's game is essentially a sequel even if it isn't officially one.

QUAD CHALLENGE

Year 1991
Publisher Namco
Developer Now Production

QUAD CHALLENGE IS a Genesis port of Namco's Four Trax, a 1989 arcade game whose main selling point was that it offered four-player simultaneous racing: the title was a reference to both the quad bike's tyres and the four-player support, you see. Since the Genesis didn't yet have a four-player adapter in 1991, the home version was a strictly solo or two-player affair. Regardless of which you choose, the screen is split anyway: either you're racing a friend in your ATV or a CPU opponent instead. There are nine tracks available, all set in the USA, so whether you prefer to do your 16-bit quad bike racing in Santa Fe, Honolulu or Death Valley you're covered here. ■

FACT

The Japanese version of Four Trax supported four players but by the time it came to the west Namco had increased support to eight players, in case any arcade owners were millionaires.

RACE DRIVIN'

Year 1993
Publisher Tengen
Developer Polygames

THE SEQUEL TO Hard Drivin' once again challenges players to make it to the end of a track before time runs out, while taking into account their car's extremely sensitive handling. There are now three tracks to choose from: the original track from Hard Drivin', a new Autocross track that focuses on speed and a Super Stunt Track that's packed with loops and corkscrews. There's now a choice of three cars too: a Roadster, a Sportster or a Speedster, each with their own wildly different feel and dashboard display. If that's not enough for you, you can also create your own track using a built-in track editor and race on that. Like its predecessor, the Genesis port struggles a little with the frame rate. ■

FACT

Race Drivin' was also released on the Saturn in Japan, where it suffered the opposite problem: the Saturn was far more powerful, making it look dated compared to the likes of Daytona USA.

RADICAL REX

Year 1994
Publisher Activision
Developer Beam Software

NOT TO BE outdone by the slew of animal mascot platformers strewn across the 16-bit landscape thanks to the success of Sonic, Activision played its hand with Radical Rex, a reasonably entertaining platform game with a hero both anthropomorphic and prehistoric. Rex used to live the cool life until an evil weasel called Skriitch turned up and used his magical powers to turn most of the world's dinosaurs evil and kidnap Rex's girlfriend Rexanne. Cue an adventure taking in ten different stages including jungles, swamps and dinosaur graveyards. Rex can attack enemies by breathing fire at them, and can also build up a powerful roar attack. Occasionally he can also ride a skateboard, because of course he can. He's radical, after all. ■

FACT

Rex is 'the raddest, baddest fire-breathing Tyrannosaurus ever to shred prehistoric pavement', according to the back of the game's box. Just in case you needed proof it was from the '90s.

RAIDEN TRAD

Year 1991
Publisher Micronet
Developer Micronet / Seibu Kaihatsu

DESPITE THE NAME suggesting that it may be some sort of spin-off, Raiden Trad is a home port of the original arcade version of Raiden (the Trad part just means Traditional). Its plot is as arbitrary as you can get: it's the year 2090 and aliens from outer space have attacked the planet. The world's united forces build a supersonic fighter jet called Raiden, and guess who has to fly it? You of course, you big goof. The game is a typical vertically scrolling shoot 'em up consisting of eight stages as you fly over countryside, a destroyed city, ancient ruins and eventually the enemy fortress. Although the default controls dictate one button press equals one shot, thankfully there's an option to turn on autofire. ■

FACT

Raiden Trad is clever when it comes to Stages 5 and 8, which are both the same enemy fortress. It gets away with featuring it twice by explaining that the first time around the fortress was under construction.

RAMBO III

Year 1989
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

JOHN RAMBO'S BASICALLY never going to get a rest. He must have thought his fighting days were behind him, but now he finds himself in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan, trying to rescue his old leader Colonel Trautman from the Russians' 'vicious interrogation' techniques (i.e. torture). Rambo III is played with an overhead perspective and takes place over six stages, including the perimeter of the enemy base, an underground prison, an arsenal and a heliport. While Rambo's main weapon is his machine gun he can also use a knife (to kill enemies silently), an explosive bow and arrow (to kill them a tad less silently) and time bombs (to kill them very loudly and also damage key obstacles). There are also bonus third-person battles against helicopters and tanks. ■

FACT

The movies went *First Blood*, *Rambo: First Blood Part II* then *Rambo III*. If you want to get petty (and I do), *Rambo III* should have been called either First Blood Part III or Rambo II.

RAMPART

Year 1991
Publisher Tengen
Developer Tengen

THIS CLEVER GAME (originally a 1990 arcade release by Atari) is part action, part puzzler. You're given a small castle and a pair of cannons, and it's your job to protect the castle from the oncoming waves of enemy ships. The game is split into two alternating phases: first, you have to use your cannons to blow up ships approaching from the nearby sea, or any troops that manage to make it to land and head towards your base. After a certain time, the building phase will begin: this lets you repair the damage caused in the previous phase by using random Tetris-like blocks to fill in the gaps. You need to fully enclose your castle before your set building time runs out: if you can't, it's Game Over. ■

FACT

This may sound counter-productive but one strategy to play Rampart involves self-sabotage by blowing your own walls up. This opens up gaps more and makes it easier to rebuild when you're given larger pieces.

RANGER X

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Gau Entertainment / Cube

THE FREE GALACTIC Systems Council on Homeworld has been attacked by the Rahuna, an Edgezone coalition of planets who want to topple the government and bring the galactic systems under their rule. That all sounds suitably sci-fi and futuristic, so let's bring out the giant robots: in particular Ranger X, a 'mysterious lone warrior' who decides it's time to toe some Rahuna rump. Ranger X can fly through the air in a jetpack while gunning down its enemies, and can also dock with the Ex-Up, a heavily armed motorcycle that drives around shooting enemies while Ranger X is doing its thing. The game is hugely improved with a 6-button controller, as buttons X and Z let players move the Ex-Up left and right, essentially controlling both Ranger X and Ex-Up at once. ■

FACT

In an interview with Japanese magazine Dengeki, designer Toshio Yamamoto explained that Ranger X didn't have a design document during development, and the team just added new ideas on the fly.

RASTAN SAGA II

Year 1991
Publisher Taito
Developer Opera House

CONFUSING NAME ASIDE (see the Fact box if you want to hurt your brain), Rastan Saga II is the sequel to Rastan, the Conan-inspired hack and slash platformer. This time Rastan has to recover the Stone of the Wise, a powerful artefact that has been stolen by a group of demons. If they can get the stone to the top of a giant temple called the Skyscraper, they'll gain the power to take over the Earth, so Rastan decides to grab his massive sword and head out pronto. Although it looks similar to its predecessor (albeit with much larger sprites and a more colourful palette), Rastan Saga II is a far more linear game, with six stages that are traversed in more or less one direction. ■

FACT

The first Rastan was called Rastan Saga in Japan. The sequel was known as Nastar in Europe and Nastar Warrior in America, but then the Genesis version was called Rastan Saga II instead. I need to lie down.

RBI BASEBALL 3

Year 1991
Publisher Tengen
Developer Tengen

THE RBI BASEBALL series started on the NES, and by the time it reached the third game Tengen was ready to transition it over to the Genesis (it launched on both systems). Like its 8-bit sibling, the Sega version of RBI 3 included all 26 teams playing in the 1990 season, albeit without the official MLB logo for team names and logos. It did have the MLBPA licence for real players, however, along with each player's 1990 season stats. Even better, it also included the four division winners from each season from 1983–1989, giving players a further 28 teams to choose from. Although it looks like you can only play exhibition games, you can actually start a series of games by choosing two teams from the same league. ■

FACT

Go to the 'Continue' setting in the Options and enter the password PAULSHAWAA and the phrase 'POW!! RIGHT IN THE PUSSSSSS' appears at the bottom of the screen. No, I don't know why.

RBI BASEBALL 4

Year 1992
Publisher Tengen
Developer Tengen

WITH RBI BASEBALL 4, Tengen finally left Nintendo behind and started focusing the series solely on the Genesis. RBI 4 included a bunch of new additions and improvements, not least a much better main menu which actually let players specify whether they wanted to play an exhibition match, a best of seven or a series of matches against the other teams in your division or the whole league. A new Home Run Derby mode let players practice their batting and a Game Breakers mode let them set specific scenarios, while each team also had their own unique stadium, along with a nifty Stadium Viewer that let players move the camera around and see all the details (such as the ivy wall at the Cubs' ground). ■

FACT

RBI 4, 93 and 94 all have a hidden animation viewing tool if you enter MOBAAAAAAAAA as a password. In RBI 3 you have to enter HELLOMOMMY instead.

RBI BASEBALL '93

Year 1993
Publisher Tengen
Developer Tengen

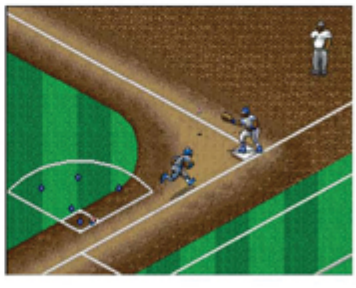
PERHAPS REALISING THAT it was going to get quite silly to keep numbering its games if it was planning to make this an annual event, Tengen switched to a yearly naming scheme with RBI 93. The changes this time weren't quite as notable: a new Defence Practice mode let players improve their fielding skills while new defensive assists let you decide whether to control your fielders fully, let the game handle their movement automatically or have a middle ground where you can override the controls whenever you like. Playing on its MLBPA licence, the game came with a poster showing eight of the league's best players (with the logos on their hats and uniforms edited out so as not to annoy the MLB, naturally). ■

FACT

The game doesn't have any credits, but there are some hidden in the code that were never used. It may be because the first name listed is Jesus Christ, who I'm fairly sure didn't work for Tengen.

RBI BASEBALL '94

Year 1994
Publisher Tengen
Developer Tengen



THE FINAL RBI game on the Mega Drive was also the first to be released in Europe, and it was a good time to get it, given the notable improvements made for the '94 version. For the first time a proper 162-game season was possible, using the actual 1994 MLB schedule (though still without an MLB licence, of course). Player animation was completely overhauled too, with Tengen utilising rotoscoping – the same technique as that used in Prince of Persia – to make pitching and batting animations look extremely smooth. Each player now also has a 'baseball card' that appears when they step up to the plate, containing a digitised photo of them. A strong finish to the series on the Mega Drive before it moved to the 32X. ■

FACT

A problem at the factory meant that some European cartridges had the label printed upside-down by mistake. Don't go chucking yours on eBay, though: they aren't particularly valuable.

RED ZONE

Year 1994
Publisher Time Warner Interactive
Developer Zyrinx

YOU CAN TELL a game knows it looks good when it opens with a screen listing all the graphical techniques it applies – including 3D vector polygon graphics, rotating background textures and full-motion video compression – while boasting it's 'all running without the use of additional hardware'. Indeed, Red Zone is something of a technical masterpiece, doing things never thought capable on the Mega Drive. The game itself is a sort of top-down take on EA's Strike series, with players piloting an AH-64B Apache helicopter as they try to stop an evil Russian madman called Ivan Retovitz from setting off a bunch of stolen nuclear weapons. The reaction was lukewarm at the time but over the years Red Zone has gathered a following of people who appreciate what it pulled off. ■

FACT

Zyrinx was a studio made up of two groups, the Crionics and the Silents, who specialised in making demo animations for the Amiga. This experience helped them get the most out of the Mega Drive.

THE REN & STIMPY SHOW PRESENTS: STIMPY'S INVENTION

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer BlueSky Software

WHILE FOUR REN & Stimpy games were released on the SNES, the Mega Drive only received one. It's a case of quality over quantity, though, as Stimpy's Invention is possibly the best of the bunch (if a little short). After Stimpy creates a new machine called the Mutate-O-Matic in an attempt to turn household garbage into glazed ham, the machine explodes and turns everyone in town into crazed enemies. Ren and Stimpy have to navigate six levels in search of the scattered machine parts to put it together and undo the damage. The pair can interact with each other to perform various skills: for example, Ren can squeeze Stimpy to shoot hairballs at enemies, while Stimpy can spin Ren's head and ride him like a helicopter. ■

FACT

An extremely early prototype of the game was eventually leaked online. Unlike most prototypes, there are a whole host of stages in this one that were cut from the finished game.

THE REVENGE OF SHINOBI

Year 1989
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

ONE OF THE first truly impressive first-party games on the Mega Drive, The Revenge of Shinobi remains an enormously well-loved game by many to this day. It's set three years after Oboro clan ninja Joe Musashi defeated the criminal organisation Zeed in the original arcade game Shinobi. In the time that's passed, Zeed has reformed as the even more powerful Neo Zeed and, seeking revenge on Musashi's interference, have killed his ninja master and kidnapped his girlfriend Naoko. Naturally, this simply won't do, so Musashi packs his dagger and his shurikens and heads off on a journey that starts in Japan (in ancient ruins in the Ibaraki Prefecture and later the rooftops of Tokyo) and moves on to the US, taking in Detroit, Chinatown and New York Harbor. The game is a side-scrolling action platformer where players can use Musashi's shurikens to hit enemies from a distance, but have to use them sparingly because they're limited. Alternatively, by getting close and attacking he'll use his dagger instead: this saves on ammo but naturally comes with its own risks. If you're the reckless type (or you've used the cheat in the Fact panel), you can pull off a somersault attack that scatters shurikens everywhere, using up a bunch of them. Notable bosses in the Japanese version include fake clones of Spider-Man, Batman and Godzilla. While Batman was replaced with a generic devil in the western version and Godzilla was eventually replaced with a skeletal dinosaur in re-releases, the fake Spider-Man instead became real because Sega had acquired the licence to make a Spider-Man game. ■

FACT

You haven't really lived if you don't know the infamous infinite shuriken trick. Go to the options, set the number of shurikens to 00, then wait a few seconds and the 00 will morph into an ∞ infinity symbol.

REVOLUTION X

Year 1994
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Rage Software

IT IS THE near future: the year 1996. A military faction called the New Order Nation has outlawed all forms of entertainment, meaning all music, television, video games and movies are now banned. When your character heads to a nightclub in LA to see an Aerosmith concert, the band is kidnapped mid-performance by NON soldiers. You have to chase after them, shooting countless NON troops along the way, culminating in a final showdown with their leader Helga at Wembley Stadium. Despite being based on a Midway arcade lightgun game, Revolution X doesn't support the Menacer or any other guns, meaning players are stuck moving a crosshair around with the D-Pad (which is often too slow to reach enemies before they fire). ■

FACT

Helga is played by Kerri Hoskins. If the name isn't familiar, flip back to the Fact panel for NBA Jam. She certainly turned up in her fair share of Midway games.

RICHARD SCARRY'S BUSYTOWN

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Novotrade

THIS EDUTAINMENT GAME is based on the cartoon series *The Busy World of Richard Scarry*, which itself was based on Scarry's children's books. It's a point-and-click experience where young players get to explore Busytown while recognising popular Scarry characters like Lowly Worm and Huckle Cat. The main town hub leads to six separate mini-games, with copious voice samples (quite a lot for a Genesis game) explaining how to play them. These include taking food orders at Bruno's Deli, building a house, driving a truck to deliver goods to residents, putting out a fire as a firefighting pig, using a crane at the dogs and even controlling the wind (just in case any youngsters have an ambition to become a deity when they grow up). ■

FACT

Scarry started illustrating children's books in 1950, but it was 1963's *Best Word Book Ever* that established him as a best-selling children's author and introduced some of his most popular characters.

RINGS OF POWER

Year 1991
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Naughty Dog

CRASH BANDICOOT? UNCHARTED? The Last of Us? None of them may have ever existed had Rings of Power been a failure. The first ever console game from the now elite studio Naughty Dog was an isometric RPG about a student sorcerer called Buc, who has to find the titular Rings of Power to build the legendary Rod of Creation and use it to free the world from the evil demon Void. Parties consist of six different types of adventurer: as well as Buc's sorcery, you'll also enlist the help of a knight, conjurer, enchanter, necromancer and archer. Whereas most console RPGs of the time followed a linear chain of events, Rings of Power is completely open-ended and players can take on most of the game's areas from the start. ■

FACT

Hold down A, B, C, Down-Right and Start on a second controller and reset the game, then the dog in the Naughty Dog logo will be replaced with a fairly graphic topless lady.

RISE OF THE ROBOTS

Year 1994
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Data Design Interactive

WHEN YOU'RE PROMISING a revolutionary fighting game that offers next-level graphics and unprecedented enemy AI, and you're so confident in its quality that you'll tell *Edge* magazine 'we'll definitely have one over on Street Fighter II' (as lead programmer Sean Griffiths did), you'd better deliver. Alas, most critics felt that Rise of the Robots fell significantly short of the hype, instead offering a rather uninspired fighter. The single-player mode only lets you play as a single character – a blue cyborg called ECO32-2 – as it fights its way through five other robots named Loader, Builder, Crusher, Military and Sentry to reach the Supervisor, a self-aware ultra-intelligent robot with the power to take over every robot in the world. It isn't intelligent enough to avoid being repeatedly jump-kicked in the corner, though. ■

FACT

The game boasts a soundtrack by Queen guitarist Brian May, but only one of his songs ('The Dark') was included. Naturally, the Mega Drive version has a 16-bit rendition of it rather than the real thing.

RISK

Year 1994
Publisher Parker Brothers
Developer Sculptured Software

RISK IS ONE of those boardgames that reached such iconic status that it – along with Monopoly, Cluedo and Trivial Pursuit – has enjoyed a number of console and PC ports over the years. This Genesis take on it is a relatively faithful recreation of the game with support for 2–6 players, at least one of whom has to be human-controlled (the rest can be CPU opponents should you wish). The big difference is the option to choose between Classic and Arcade versions of the game: Classic plays out its battles like the board game does, with animations of cannons shooting at each other standing in for dice rolls. Arcade, however, lets players grab their own controller and actually control the tanks, making it more skill-based. ■

FACT

Not only have there been Risk video games, a number of video games have received their own official editions of Risk, inlcuding Halo, Metal Gear Solid, Mass Effect and Assassin's Creed.

RISKY WOODS

Year 1992
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Zeus Software

THE EVIL GOD Draxos has frozen a group of ancient monks in stone. These monks keep the Lost Lands in balance, and without them evil is running rampant, with rotting reanimated corpses roaming the streets. You play as Rohan, a young warrior who's taken it upon himself to enter the Risky Woods – which isn't the nicest thing to name your forest, to be fair – free the monks and defeat Draxos. Risky Woods is a side-scrolling action platformer consisting of four worlds: Mountain Pass, Hanging Gardens, Catacombs and Hidden World. At first Rohan is armed with throwing knives, but by opening special gates you can pick up better weapons like an axe, a boomerang or a morning star (aka ye olde big spiky ball on ye olde chain). ■

FACT

The original Amiga version of Risky Woods had Rohan dressed like an action hero, with a red bandana and a black Rambo-style vest. This was changed to something more 'monk-like' for the Mega Drive.

RISTAR

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

WHAT DO YOU do when you've struck gold with Sonic the Hedgehog and want to see if lightning will strike twice? Enter Ristar, a shooting star based on an early character design for Sonic: a bunny whose ears could extend and grab things. Like this concept bunny, Ristar has stretchy arms which can be fired out to grab hold of enemies, items and parts of the scenery. As such, the game may be based on the Sonic engine but it's got a much slower pace, with a focus more on physical interaction with the environment than simply running and jumping through it. Released just three months before the Saturn launched, Ristar perhaps arrived a little too late in the Mega Drive's life to let him take off like Sonic did. ■

FACT

Entering MASTER as a password in the Japanese version of the game brought up a message saying: 'Please wait for next story, thank you.' This implied a sequel was coming.

ROADBLASTERS

Year 1991
Publisher Tengen
Developer Sterling Silver Software

ROADBLASTERS IS WHAT you would get if you took an arcade racing game and armed your car with heavy weaponry (less OutRun and more OutGun, if you will). It's set in a post-apocalyptic future, where survival is the name of the game. There are 50 different stages, each ending with a 'rally point': you have to reach the rally point in each before you run out of fuel. Along the way you'll encounter enemy cars on the road, which can be gunned down with your on-board machine guns. Later stages add roadside gun turrets and landmines that have to be avoided. It's not just you against the world, though: occasionally a support jet will appear and drop weapon attachments onto your car, giving you autofire, speed boosts and the like. ■

FACT

In Disney's video game movie *Wreck-It Ralph*, RoadBlasters was the second arcade game installed in Litwak's Arcade. It's the game Turbo sabotages and glitches out, causing Litwak to disconnect it.

ROAD RASH

Year 1991
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Electronic Arts

ASK SOMEONE TO round off their favourite EA Mega Drive games and chances are, along with their sports games and the likes of Desert Strike, Road Rash will appear high on many gamers' lists. This combat racing game lets you race a motorbike through the backroads of five different Californian locations: the Sierra Nevada, the Pacific Coast, the Redwood Forest, Palm Desert and Grass Valley. Each race consists of 15 bikers, each with their own names and personalities, but here's the twist: while you naturally win a race by finishing in first place, you can make things a little easier for yourself by punching and kicking opponents to try and knock them off their bikes. Some of the other racers are even armed with big clubs, which you can grab off them and use yourself. Accidents do happen, of course, and before long

you'll find yourself crashing and being launched off your bike. Rather than respawning, you have to do the long jog of shame and stumble back to your fallen bike, pick it up and get back on it again. This isn't always as straightforward as it sounds, because you can still be run over by traffic and other bikes while you're on foot. The overall aim is to finish first in all five locations, at which point you'll move onto the next level (there are five in total) and do it all over again against faster opponents. To keep up with them you'll need to spend your prize money on increasingly more powerful (and expensive) bikes. ■

FACT

Road Rash began life as a prototype Mario Andretti racing game for the NES. Since the NES couldn't handle the banked roads needed, the game moved to the Mega Drive under the working title Road Rash on Mulholland Drive.

ROAD RASH II

Year 1992
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer EA Studios

THE SEQUEL TO Road Rash looks extremely similar at first glance, and to be fair, it feels near-identical to play too. That's not to say it isn't without new features, however. For starters, the five new tracks are no longer set in California and instead take place across America (Hawaii, Arizona, Tennessee, Alaska and Vermont). There are now chains as well as clubs, and you can now knock policemen off their motorbikes if you're feeling brave. Some of the later bikes you can unlock also have nitro capabilities, letting you activate a speed boost by double-tapping the B button. Most notable, however, is the addition of a split-screen two-player mode, allowing a pair of chums to play through the game together (instead of taking turns as before). ■

FACT

A novelisation of Road Rash was written by Sega Power magazine writer Neil West and bundled with the May 1992 issue of the mag.

ROAD RASH III: TOUR DE FORCE

Year 1995
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Monkey Do Productions

FOR THE THIRD and final Road Rash game (on the Mega Drive, at least), EA decided to give the game's visuals an overhaul and replaced the bikers with digitised sprites of real people. While this made the game look more realistic in still screenshots, in motion some argued that it was lacking the character of its predecessors. Since the first game's tracks were set across California and the second's were set across the US, there was only one way to go for the sequel: its seven tracks take place around the entire world, taking in Australia, Kenya, Italy, Germany, Brazil, Japan and the UK. There are now seven different weapons including crowbars and nunchucks, while cop chases can now be escalated to include helicopters. ■

FACT

The Road Rash series would continue onto the 3DO, PlayStation and Nintendo 64. The final game in the series, Road Rash: Jailbreak, was released in 2000.

ROBOCOP 3

Year 1993
Publisher Flying Edge
Developer Ocean Software

IT'S 1999 IN Old Detroit, and evil megacorporation OCP is kicking the poverty-stricken residents of Cadillac Heights out of their homes so they can redevelop the area for richer people. Anyone who resists will be shot down by the corrupt Urban Rehabilitation Cops. Naturally, as you might expect, RoboCop isn't too keen on this and so he decides to put an end to said mass gentrification by carrying out mass mutilation: not only on the corrupt Rehab cops, but also the junkie Splatter Punks gang who are using the situation to start their own riots. He's an equal opportunity gunslinger, you see. RoboCop 3 has six stages, starting off at OCP's construction site before moving on to the Rehab headquarters, the sewers and OCP's main offices. ■

FACT

The *RoboCop 3* movie was a commercial disaster. It cost $22 million to make and only made $10 million worldwide.

ROBOCOP VERSUS THE TERMINATOR

Year 1994
Publisher Virgin Games
Developer Virgin Games

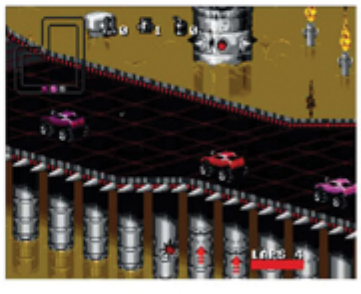
BASED ON THE hugely popular Dark Horse comic series by Frank Miller and Walter Simonson, Robocop Versus the Terminator brings together two of the greatest '80s action movie stars (I'll let you guess which ones) in a surprisingly gory adventure. It turns out that the self-aware network Skynet that takes over the world in the Terminator movies was based on RoboCop's neural networks. When he finds out, RoboCop plans to head to OCP and regenerate himself into the future so he can destroy Skynet, but Skynet has sent a bunch of Terminators to the present day to stop him. It's all very complicated: all you need to know is that you play as RoboCop, you have a load of big guns and everyone you shoot somehow explodes in a shower of blood. ■

FACT

If the game's too difficult for you, pause and press C, C, A, A, B, B, C, C, A, A, B, B. You'll be taken to a secret room with a photo of programmer John Botti, where you're given 54 lives.

ROCK N' ROLL RACING

Year 1994
Publisher Interplay
Developer Blizzard Entertainment



THIS ISOMETRIC RACING game plays like an edgier version of Rare's Championship Pro-Am, what with its similarly isometric viewpoint and its focus on vehicular combat. There are six different planets in the game, each with their own series of races (making for a total of 48 tracks), and the aim is to gather enough points by finishing in a decent enough position to end up top of the division after each series. The game's most unique selling point, however, is its soundtrack: as the name suggests, there are a bunch of licensed rock songs featured in the game, albeit Mega Drive versions of them. These include Bad to the Bone by George Thorogood, Highway Star by Deep Purple and Paranoid by Black Sabbath. ■

FACT

To unlock Olaf from The Lost Vikings as a playable racer, press Up, Right, Up, Right, Down, Left, Down, Left, Right on the character select screen.

ROCKET KNIGHT ADVENTURES

Year 1993
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

THIS ENTERTAINING ACTION platformer was created by Nobuya Nakazato, who was previously responsible for directing the iconic Contra III (Super Probotector) for the SNES. Sparkster is an opossum and the leader of the Rocket Knights, a group of armoured warriors who use swords and rocket packs to protect their kingdom. When a corrupt dark knight called Axle Gear kidnaps the princess, Sparkster sets off across seven stages to rescue her. While Sparkster's main method of attack is his mystical sword, he can also charge up his rocket pack and fire himself in a straight line across the screen in any direction. This not only takes out enemies, it also helps him blast upwards to reach otherwise inaccessible areas. Being an opossum, Sparkster can also use his tail to grab onto higher platforms. ■

FACT

Konami and developer Climax Studios released a new Rocket Knight game called, um, Rocket Knight, on the Xbox 360 and PS3's digital stores in 2010.

ROGER CLEMENS' MVP BASEBALL

Year 1992
Publisher Flying Edge
Developer Sculptured Software

ACCLAIM (THROUGH ITS Flying Edge label) decided to take on baseball by appointing three-time Cy Young Award winner Roger 'The Rocket' Clemens as its cover star. Clemens is the only real player in the game: the rest of the rosters for all 26 (unlicensed) teams are made up, many with comedy names (Steve Sax is called Clarinet, Rob Deer is called Bambi and Tim Raines is called Snows).

The game was mainly criticised for its odd camera angles, especially when fielding: the extremely low camera made catching the ball tricky, while the fact that the fielding camera points towards home means that throwing to specific bases is counter-intuitive. For example, when throwing to first you hold down Right on the D-Pad, even though first base is on the left-hand side of the screen. ■

FACT

Other alternate player names in the game include Order (for Vance Law), Judge (for David Justice) and Less (for Mike Moore).

ROLLING THUNDER 2

Year 1991
Publisher Namco
Developer Namco

ONE OF THE best non-Bond secret agent games you'll find, Rolling Thunder 2 stars two international intelligence agents called Albatross and Leila, who've been assigned a dangerous mission: infiltrate terrorist organisation Geldra and take it down, along with rogue arms merchant Gimdo. The game is a run and gun affair, with plenty of hiding behind boxes and engaging in great action movie style shootouts where you and an enemy are taking cover and seeing who'll blink. Along the way there are numerous doors: some of these can be used as hiding places but others replenish your bullets or even reward you with a machine gun for a brief period. There's also a two-player co-op mode, which is similarly entertaining. ■

FACT

The password system involves putting together strange coded sentences. For example, level 8 is A NATURAL RAINBOW ELECTED THE FUTURE while the final stage is A PRIVATE THUNDER CREATED THE POWDER.

ROLLING THUNDER 3

Year 1993
Publisher Namco
Developer Now Production

IF THE ACTION-PACKED espionage hijinks of Rolling Thunder 2 weren't enough to satisfy you, Rolling Thunder 3 – a Genesis exclusive – attempted to give you more of the same. This time you're playing as Jay, a new operative who's been tasked with finding and defeating Dread, the second-in-command of Geldra, while Albatross and Leila continue to take care of Gimdo. The main improvement here is the option to choose between one of nine secondary weapons at the start of a stage and then switch between two weapons at will: these include a shotgun, a laser, a selection of grenades and even a bazooka. You can now shoot diagonally upwards too, making it easier to take out higher enemies without having to leap up to their level like before. ■

FACT

If you're disappointed that the second game gave you the option to play as a woman but Rolling Thunder 3 didn't, enter the password GREED and a hidden female agent is unlocked.

ROLO TO THE RESCUE

Year 1992
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Vectordean

ONE OF THE Mega Drive's hidden games, Rolo to the Rescue is an entertaining platform game, if a slightly difficult one given its appeal to children. It stars a cute young elephant called Rolo, whose mum has been kidnapped by an evil circus owner called McSmiley. Rolo has to clear more than 60 levels, but he won't be doing it alone: on his travels he'll also rescue other animal friends from cages, each of whom have their own abilities: the rabbit can jump extremely high, the squirrel can climb walls, the mole can dig through loose dirt and the beaver can travel across water. As levels get more complex, Rolo can stack his animal pals on his back so the player can switch between them to get past various obstacles. ■

FACT

The game ends with an adult Rolo telling his son a bedtime story about the events of the game. 'If you're good,' he promises him, 'tomorrow I'll tell you about the time I met David Attenborough.'

ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS II

Year 1992
Publisher Koei
Developer Koei

BASED ON THE fourteenth century historical Chinese novel of the same name, the Romance of the Three Kingdoms series are arguably the most popular of Koei's historical turn-based strategy games (of which there have been plenty, as this book shows). This second entry in the series consists of six different scenarios, each focusing on key moments in the early establishment of power in ancient China. You can recreate Dong Zhuo's seizure of control in Luoyang in 189 AD, relive the period when Lui Bei sought shelter in the Jing Province in 201 AD, or experience the rise of Wei, Wu and Shu again like it was only yesterday (instead of 1,800 years ago). The game is won when your chosen warlord conquers every territory in China. ■

FACT

At the time of writing there have been 14 games in the series. While many have been released in North America, European console gamers have only seen parts 8, 13 and 14.

ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS III: DRAGON OF DESTINY

Year 1992
Publisher Koei
Developer Koei

THE THIRD GAME in the Romance of the Three Kingdoms series is similar to its predecessor, offering six different scenarios to play though. This means if you enjoyed the second game but really wish you had been able to relive the moment when Dong Zhuo's rivals united in 189 AD, when Cao Cao's power expanded in 201 AD or when Liu Bei built the Shu Kingdom in 221 AD you can now openly weep tears of joy because those dreams have finally been realised. The new scenarios aside, the aim remains the same: occupy all 46 cities in China to become the Emperor and claim the Dragon's Throne. Because that's what the title refers to, just in case you thought there was an actual dragon in it. Historical simulation, remember. ■

FACT

During the Han era (before these games took place), a census showed around 56 million people in China. After the bloody events of 180-200 AD, another census reported 16 million people.

RUGBY WORLD CUP 1995

Year 1994
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Electronic Arts UK

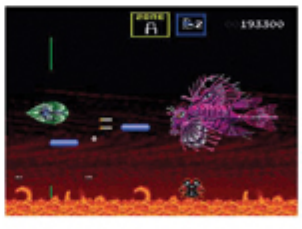
THE SUCCESS OF FIFA perhaps showed EA that there was life to sports games outside of North America: this may have been the reason the publisher greenlit a rugby union game using the FIFA engine despite the relative lack of interest for rugby in that continent. Sporting the official licence for the 1995 Rugby World Cup, the game includes all 16 teams that qualified for the tournament as well as a further 14 nations who didn't make the cut (so you're in luck, Zimbabwe fans). Players can take part in the proper 1995 tournament with the correct fixture list, or play a randomly generated tournament instead. Although the 16 qualified teams have their official logos in the game, all the player names are fake. ■

FACT

The 1995 Rugby World Cup was the first major sporting event held in South Africa since apartheid ended. It was won by South Africa, which is a lovely Hollywood ending, really.

SAGAIA

Year 1991
Publisher Taito
Developer Taito



BEST KNOWN BY its Japanese title Darius II, Sagaia is a side-scrolling shoot 'em up in which the player takes control of the Silver Hawk, a powerful spaceship tasked with heading to the previously devastated planet Darius in search of the source of a mysterious SOS signal. Players can choose between two pilots, Proco Jr and Tiat Young, the latter being best suited to beginners because they come with the first batch of power-ups already applied. While the main meat of the game is fairly routine by shoot 'em up standards – you can shoot normal shots and drop bombs, and power-ups apply themselves in a straightforward manner – the main gimmick is the branching level structure: although one playthrough takes in seven stages, there are actually 26 different possible levels. ■

FACT

The original Darius was never released on the Mega Drive, but developer M2 created a brand new port and included it in the Sega Mega Drive Mini console.

SAINT SWORD

Year 1991
Publisher Taito
Developer Cyclone System

AN EVIL WIZARD called Gorgan once ruled the Earth until the humans and a race of wizards called the Titans decided to form an alliance and drove Gorgan away. A thousand years later, the Titans' powers have weakened through lack of use, but now Gorgan has returned. The Earth's only hope is Macress, a young Titan who has the same level of power his predecessors had. It's up to him to destroy Gorgan using his special shape-shifting abilities. As he explores the game's seven stages, Macress uses his sword to defeat enemies. Some of them drop special items that let him transform into either a centaur (which lets him run fast and jump high), a birdman (so he can fly around the screen) or a fishman (which enables him to swim underwater). ■

FACT

In true Ghosts 'n Goblins style, Gorgan will send you right back to the start of the game when you defeat him the first time, causing you to play through it all over again to beat him for good.

SAMPRAS TENNIS 96

Year 1995
Publisher Codemasters
Developer Codemasters

THE SEQUEL TO Pete Sampras Tennis improves on its predecessor in a number of ways, including a revamp of its graphics engine to provide a 'parallax scrolling 3D court' (which in reality just means the camera moves slightly to the side now instead of remaining static like it did before). The range of strokes has widened to include things like jump shots, top spin and hard smashes, and a new 'aftertouch' technique lets you add power and direction to the ball. A new indoor court joins the previous grass, clay and hard ones, and the World Tour mode can now be played in doubles should you so wish. It isn't all good news, though: the number of playable characters has dropped sharply from 32 to just eight. ■

FACT

A quote on the back of the box reads: 'The variety of shots, skill and tactics in Sampras '96 make this the ultimate multiplayer experience.' Who said it? Why, it was Pete Sampras, funnily enough.

SAMURAI SHODOWN

Year 1994
Publisher Takara
Developer Saurus

THE FIRST IN a lengthy series of SNK fighting games that continues to this day, Samurai Shodown differs from other SNK series like The King of Fighters and Fatal Fury in that it focuses mainly on weapons-based combat. It's set at the end of the eighteenth century, and has players choosing between 11 expert sword fighters with the aim being to defeat all the others and then take on the evil final boss Amakusa (who's playable in the two-player Versus mode). The Mega Drive version is visually better than the SNES port, with a tighter camera and larger sprites as a result, but it still doesn't have the sprite-scaling and zooming effects the Neo-Geo original does. What's more, the Sega port is missing the enormous Earthquake character and his stage. ■

FACT

If you fancy trying out the Samurai Shodown series on more modern systems, the Samurai Shodown Neo Geo Collection was released on Switch, PS4, Xbox One and PC in 2020 and contains the first five games.

SATURDAY NIGHT SLAM MASTERS

Year 1994
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom

THIS IS AN interesting cross between your typical Capcom fighting game and a wrestling game, with a stronger emphasis on the latter. Saturday Night Slam Masters features ten musclebound grapplers to choose from, ranging from the Russian Ultimate Warrior lookalike Biff Slamkovich to Australian ex-rugby player Alexander the Grater. Even Mike Haggar from Final Fight is in there, because you know he'd never turn down a scrap. The Mega Drive port has an exclusive Death Match mode not found in any other version of the game: this replaces the ropes with barbed wire, gives the fighters a load of weapons to use and even places landmines outside the ring. You know, just in case there's any chance they'll survive the match unscathed. ■

FACT

An arcade-only sequel called Ring of Destruction launched in 1994 and played far more like a standard Capcom fighting game, with the action locked to a single 2D plane.

SCOOBY-DOO MYSTERY

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Sunsoft, Illusions

WHILE THE SNES version of Scooby-Doo Mystery is a side-scrolling adventure game which feels a bit like a platformer without the jumping, the Genesis version – despite having the same title and cover art – is a completely different game. Sega owners instead got a point-and-click adventure more in line with the likes of The Secret of Monkey Island. There are two separate mysteries to solve: a ghost scaring away the guests of Blake's Hotel, and a mad clown terrorising the Ha-Ha Carnival. Each story has you controlling Shaggy and Scooby as they explore the environment using 10 point-and-click verbs (look, take, talk, use… that sort of thing). An interesting way to handle a children's licence rather than the usual platform game solution. ■

FACT

Scooby-Doo got his name when TV executive Fred Silverman was taking a flight to LA and was listening to Frank Sinatra's Strangers in the Night, which ends with him singing 'doobie doobie doo'.

SEAQUEST DSV

Year 1994
Publisher Black Pearl Software
Developer Sculptured Software

THIS UNDERWATER ACTION game was made to tie in with the *seaQuest DSV* series, which – along with a title that infuriated writers who appreciate good grammar – offered copious deep-sea sci-fi drama. The video game version is split into two different sections: the first is a sort of underwater hub section shown from an isometric viewpoint where you explore the ocean quadrant in order to trigger new missions. These missions are carried out in a side-scrolling view and allow you to choose between six different vehicles, some of which are better suited to certain tasks: these include a mining ship called the Crab, a one-person attack sub called the Stinger and the seaQuest crew's hyper-intelligent dolphin Darwin. Who isn't technically a vehicle, I suppose. ■

FACT

The seaQuest ship's full name is seaQuest DSV 4600. The number was a reference to building number 4600 on the Universal Studios lot, which contained production company Amblin Television.

SECOND SAMURAI

Year 1994
Publisher Image Works
Developer Vivid Image

THE SEQUEL TO First Samurai (which wasn't released on the Mega Drive), Second Samurai follows the hero from the first game as he travels through time in search of the Demon King, who killed his teacher. There's a lot to see: one minute you're in the past – fighting cavemen and monkeys and riding on dinosaurs – and the next you're in the future, taking on Terminator-like endoskeletons, before finally heading to feudal Japan. There are few games on the console that offer as much action as this one: it's constantly spawning enemies who come at you from both directions, and there's a steady stream of power-ups that give you throwing knives, swords and health boosts. There's also a two-player co-op mode where player two controls a female samurai. ■

FACT

Although Second Samurai was initially released for the Amiga, the Mega Drive version is practically nothing like it. The stages are completely different, and the Amiga version's second player is a bald male monk.

SEGA SPORTS 1

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

IF YOU THOUGHT you were done reading about Sega's multi-game compilations after all those Mega Games collections earlier in the book, think again. As the name implies, Sega Sports 1 takes three sports games published by Sega and stuffs them all into a single cartridge. The games in question are Super Monaco GP, Wimbledon Championship Tennis and Ultimate Soccer (and not World Cup Italia 90, which is remarkable given how often it appeared in Mega Games collections). It would seem that someone at Sega was perhaps getting a little too far ahead of themselves, however, because despite the title suggesting this was to be the first game in a series, there was never a Sega Sports 2. Let that be a lesson to you all. ■

FACT

If you hold down A, B and C while crossing the finish line in first place in Super Monaco GP, you'll see your driver lifting their own decapitated head instead of a trophy.

SEGA TOP FIVE

Year	1997
Publisher	Tec Toy
Developer	Sega

SEGA'S BRAZILIAN DISTRIBUTOR Tec Toy released a couple of multi-game cartridges itself, giving Brazlian Mega Drive owners the chance to build a nice library of games at a lower price. Sega Top Five consists, somewhat unsurprisingly, of five games all contained on a single cartridge: Flicky, Sega Soccer, Shadow Dancer: The Secret of Shinobi, Super Monaco GP and Super Thunder Blade. If Sega Soccer isn't familiar to you, that's because – as explained in the entry for Mega 6 Vol 3 – it's actually World Cup Italia 90 with the World Cup licence finally removed after more than half a decade. Incidentally, this is the only time Shadow Dancer was featured in a compilation, rather than the far more common Revenge of Shinobi. ■

FACT

If you don't fancy mutilating your own driver in Super Monaco GP, you can always resort to the tried and tested method of hitting the guy waving the chequered flag, sending him flying into space.

SEGA TOP TEN

Year	1997
Publisher	Tec Toy
Developer	Various

HERE'S A COMPILATION that isn't messing around. Sega Top Ten was another cartridge released by Tec Toy, but this one outdoes Sega Top Five and then some because it manages to shoehorn no fewer than ten games – obviously – onto one cartridge, and it's not like they're all stinkers either (though obviously many of them had been seen in other compilation carts). The full list consists of Super Hang-On, Golden Axe, Columns, The Revenge of Shinobi, Streets of Rage, Sega Soccer, Super Monaco GP, Flicky, Sonic the Hedgehog and California Games. The last of those is particularly interesting because although it was developed by Sega, the California Games name had been owned by Epyx, who had dissolved by the time Sega Top Ten was released. ■

FACT

Sega Top Ten was later re-released as 10 Super Jogos. It was also released in Asia as Mega Games 10.

SENSIBLE SOCCER: EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS

Year	1993
Publisher	Sony Imagesoft
Developer	Sensible Software

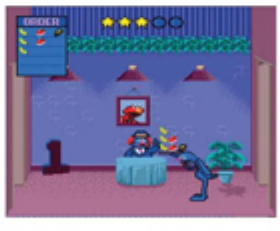
WHILE THESE DAYS the war between football games consists of two factions – FIFA and Pro Evolution Soccer – it wasn't always the case. Before either EA or Konami's games even existed Sensible Soccer was the top of the football game league table in Europe, thanks to its blisteringly fast pace and its brilliantly swervy shots. This Mega Drive version is actually a port of the update, Sensible Soccer 92/93, which means all the squads are based on that particular season. Well, sort of: there's no official licence here, you see, so Sony and Sensible decided to play it safe and went with unofficial team and players names. This meant instead of Ian Wright and Paul Merson playing for Arsenal, it was Oan Wroght and Peul Mirson playing for Highbury. ■

FACT

American magazine *GamePro* reviewed a Genesis version called Championship Soccer 94, claiming it was rental only. Although it did see SNES and Sega CD releases in North America, there's no evidence the Genesis version made it.

SESAME STREET: COUNTING CAFE

Year	1994
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Developer	Riedel Software Productions



ELECTRONIC ARTS BRIEFLY had an edutainment label called EA Kids, and its lineup included this licensed *Sesame Street* game. Players control Grover as he works as a waiter at the Counting Cafe. In each stage a blue Muppet called Mr Johnson orders a certain number of food items: two bananas, three apples and one egg, for example. Grover then has to head to the kitchen and stack his tray with the right number of food items in order to make his customer happy. As the game progresses, Mr Johnson's orders get more elaborate and other Sesame Street characters start turning up in the kitchen, getting in Grover's way and messing with his order. Bert, for example, is seen playing golf with eggs and can potentially land one on Grover's plate. ■

FACT

EA Kids was renamed Creative Wonders and became a joint venture between EA and ABC. It released more Sesame Street games on PC, as well as games based on Dr Seuss, Arthur and The Babysitters Club.

SHADOW BLASTERS

Year 1990
Publisher Sigma Enterprises
Developer Sage's Creation

ASHURA, THE KING of the Evil World, has taken advantage of humankind's eroded morals and has taken over the world. The gods decide to try and help by 'injecting their supreme power' into four human warriors: male ninja Horatio, female ninja Tiffany, undefeated Japanese fencer Leo and buddhist monk Horatio. The four have to work together to reach and defeat Ashura in order to save the Earth. Shadow Blasters has a unique structure in that players can decide the order in which to take on the first six stages (after which there are a final three stages set in Hell, Heaven and outer space). Each character also only has one life, and although you can switch between them at will, when one dies they're dead for the rest of the game. ■

FACT

The final boss does away with everything encountered in the previous stages and is instead a massive one-on-one fight between Ashura and the god Hyperion.

SHADOW DANCER: THE SECRET OF SHINOBI

Year 1990
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

ALTHOUGH THE REVENGE of Shinobi was technically the Mega Drive sequel to Shinobi, in the arcades it was a different story: the second Shinobi game there was Shadow Dancer. This Mega Drive 'port' isn't actually a port at all, it's essentially a completely different game with only a few elements carried over from the arcade version. Players once again control Joe Musashi, who's travelled to New York City to investigate the death of his former student Kato. Adopting Kato's dog Yamato, Musashi heads out to bring down Union Lizard, a massive ninja group run by a hideous reptile called Saurus. While most of the game plays like Revenge of Shinobi the main addition is the ability to send out Yamato to bite enemies, temporarily incapacitating them while you attack. ■

FACT

While the western manual states that the hero is Joe Musashi, the Japanese manual instead claims that it's Hayate, Musashi's son.

SHADOW OF THE BEAST

Year 1991
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Psygnosis

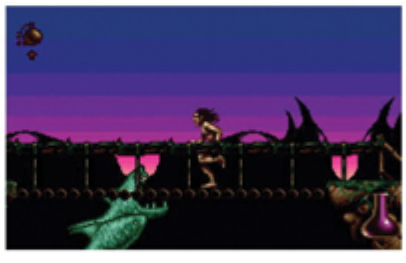
AT ONE POINT, Shadow of the Beast was the showcase game for the Commodore Amiga computer: I distinctly remember numerous electronics stores across the UK showing its rolling demo with its ridiculously complex parallax scrolling. The Mega Drive port retained a fair degree of this, its outdoor sections looking particularly impressive. The game is an action platformer that tells the story of an unnamed protagonist who was kidnapped as a child and raised to become the messenger of the Beast Lord. When, as an adult, he suddenly regains his memories and realises what happened, he decides to seek revenge by fighting his way through the land, destroying the Beast Lord's minions to reach the big guy himself (and escape the shadow of the Beast, if you will). ■

FACT

A remake of Shadow of the Beast was released on the PlayStation 4 in 2016. It included the Amiga version as an unlockable extra, with an optional 'infinite lives' mode (because kids today).

SHADOW OF THE BEAST II

Year 1992
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Psygnosis



AFTER WINNING THE battle with the Beast Mage Zelek at the end of the first Shadow of the Beast, our protagonist was freed of his beast form and was given his human body again. There's just one problem: the Beast Lord is still around, and if our hero isn't his messenger anymore he's going to need another one, which is why Zelek's kidnapped the hero's sister and taken her to the far-off land of Kara-Moon, where she'll be isolated for years and groomed to become the next messenger. This time the hero won't be alone for the entire journey: along the way he'll meet various creatures who have information for him and may be able to help him on his quest. ■

FACT

The trilogy concluded with Shadow of the Beast III, which was only released on the Amiga and saw the hero trying to defeat the Beast Lord once and for all to become fully human (instead of a beast with a human body).

SHADOWRUN

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer BlueSky Software

THIS ACTION RPG was based on the cyberpunk role-playing board game of the same name and plays nothing like the SNES game released the same year by Beam Software and Data East. Players control Joshua, a Shadowrunner who's trying to solve the mystery of his brother's death. There are three different classes you can choose to play as, each with their own different strengths: a Samurai (who focuses on combat), a Decker (who excels in hacking), and a Gator Shaman (who can use magic during combat). The game is open-ended, meaning you can take on random jobs from shady characters called 'Mr Johnsons' and complete these to earn karma points, which can be used to increase your skills when you're resting in hotels. ■

FACT

There was also a Shadowrun visual novel released for the Mega CD in Japan. It had nothing to do with the Mega Drive game and was instead set in Japan.

SHANGHAI II: DRAGON'S EYE

Year 1994
Publisher Activision
Developer Home Data

BETTER KNOWN TO some as mahjong solitaire, Shanghai (which is Activision's trademarked version) is a compelling puzzle game where the aim is to clear an elaborately laid out structure of tiles by removing pairs of tiles. You can only remove tiles that have a free side (and can therefore be slid out), so as you remove the outer tiles you'll gain access to more enclosed ones. This Genesis release has a bunch of customisation options to make the game more varied and accessible to western gamers: as well as 13 different layouts (as opposed to just the usual 'turtle' shaped one), there are also nine different tilesets, allowing players to replace the standard (and slightly confusing) Chinese tiles with more recognisable symbols like flags, letters or sports iconography. ■

FACT

Activision (via Sunsoft) continued to bring Shanghai to Sega consoles until the bitter end, with three Shanghai games on the Saturn and one on the Dreamcast.

SHAQ FU

Year 1994
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Delphine Software

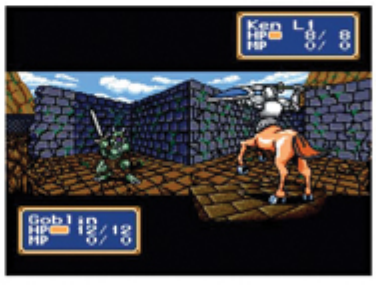
YOU KNOW, YOUR console isn't really a proper console until it's got a Shaquille O'Neal fighting game on it. Shaq Fu stars the then Orlando Magic star as he finds himself in an alternate dimension where he has to rescue a young lad called Nezu from an evil mummy called Sett Ra. Because it was developed by the same studio responsible for Another World and Flashback the animation is impressively smooth, but this has an impact on the responsiveness, which is never ideal for a fighting game. This – presumably combined with the general concept of a Shaq fighting game – led many to unfairly declare Shaq Fu one of the worst games ever made, rather than simply the average one it is. ■

FACT

For some reason, the Mega Drive version of Shaq Fu contains five more characters and three more stages than the SNES version.

SHINING FORCE

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Sonic Software Planning



SHINING FORCE IS the sequel to Shining in the Darkness (see over the page), but rather than a first-person dungeon exploration game it's instead a turn-based tactical RPG with a battle system similar to that in games like Fire Emblem. The hero, Max (who can be renamed), has to save the land of Rune from the evil forces of Runefaust – led by the nefarious Kane – before they can resurrect the Dark Dragon and destroy the world. Throughout Max's journey he'll recruit more party members, with 30 to choose from. Whereas Fire Emblem games usually have permadeath (meaning a party member killed in battle is gone for the rest of the story), Shining Force doesn't, making it a more approachable entry point to the genre. ■

FACT

There are more than 30 games set in the Shining universe. Most of them are standalone stories, so don't worry that you're missing out.

SHINING FORCE II

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Sonic Software Planning

THE SECOND SHINING Force game is unrelated to the original in terms of plot. It's set in the Granseal Kingdom and opens with a thief stealing the Stones of Light and Dark, unintentionally unleashing the Evil of all Ages (or Zeon, as his friends call him). It's up to a young squire called Bowie and his friends to travel the land, find the Force Sword and put Zeon away for good. Combat is similar to that in the first Shining Force, with turn-based strategy the order of the day and another 30 or so characters to potentially enlist for your squad. Some issues with the accuracy of the translation mean that the English language version isn't necessarily as canon as the Japanese one. ■

FACT

While the plots of Shining Force I and II are unrelated, a Japanese Game Gear release called Shining Force Gaiden: Final Conflict tied both stories together.

SHINING IN THE DARKNESS

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Sonic Software Planning

BEFORE THERE WAS the Shining Force series there was Shining in the Darkness. The Kingdom of Thornwood is in chaos after both Princess Jessa and the protagonist's father Mortred have disappeared (not together: it's not like that). The evil sorcerer Dark Sol then turns up and makes an offer: hand over the kingdom to him and he'll hand over the two hostages. Naturally, there wouldn't be much of a game if the town agreed, so off you head – along with two companions called Pyra and Milo – to explore a giant labyrinth in search of justice. Whereas the Shining Force games were tactical strategy titles, Shining in the Darkness is a first-person dungeon crawler with a more traditional turn-based RPG battle system. ■

FACT

The weapons shop in town is owned by a white-bearded, green-vested chap who looks exactly like Gilius Thunderhead from Golden Axe.

SHINOBI III: RETURN OF THE NINJA MASTER

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

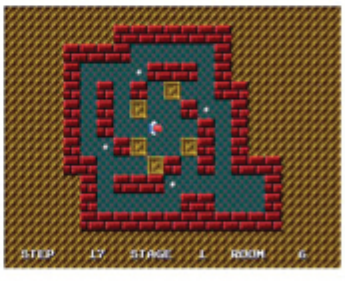
WE'VE ALREADY ESTABLISHED that while Shadow Dancer was the sequel to Shinobi in the arcades, Revenge of Shinobi was very much the Mega Drive's own 'Shinobi 2'. That's why Shinobi III, a Mega Drive exclusive, plays just like Revenge of Shinobi, with not a single dog companion in sight. After defeating the Neo Zeed in Revenge, Joe Musashi returns to Japan to rest, but he can't: the Neo Zeed are rebuilding and he can sense it, so he heads out again to put a permanent end to them. Although Shinobi III's action platformer mechanics are just like those of Revenge for the most part, there are also some auto-scrolling stages where Musashi rides a horse or a jetski/surfboard hybrid. ■

FACT

Shinobi III actually supports six-button controls with an elaborate cheat code that requires two controllers. When activated, it assigns shurikens, sword attacks and blocks to different buttons rather than just one.

SHOVE IT! THE WAREHOUSE GAME

Year 1990
Publisher DreamWorks
Developer NCS



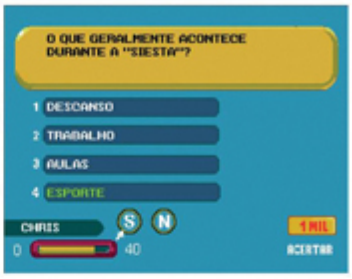
IT'S HARD TO feel too much sympathy for Stevedore. He may have the worst name in the history of video games, and he may be working countless overtime shifts at the warehouses at the docks, but the reason he's doing it is extremely shallow: he wants to be able to afford a fancy red sports car so he can attract a certain girl and win her away from her boyfriend. The cover even shows him dreaming about the car and the girl. Should you wish to help Stevedore achieve his outdated dream, you have to help him work his way through 160 separate warehouse rooms, pushing its boxes to specific locations. Yes, it's a basic block-pushing puzzle game, albeit one with a little casual misogyny thrown in for yuks. ■

FACT

Although it's hard to disagree with a pun title like Shove It!, the Japanese version has a far superior name: The Greatest Warehouse Keeper of All Time.

SHOW DO MILHÃO

Year	2001
Publisher	Tec Toy
Developer	Tec Toy



LONG AFTER OTHER regions moved on to the next generation of gaming (and the generation after that), Brazil continued to manufacture and sell the Mega Drive and even the Master System, both of which continued to sell in strong numbers. As seen elsewhere in this book, distributor Tec Toy even made a number of Mega Drive games that were exclusive to Brazil, many of which were released long after the console was dead everywhere else in the world. One of these was Show do Milhão, a 2001(!) game based on an unauthorised Brazilian TV version of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* where the price was a million real (about £135,000 as of early 2021). Good luck playing it if you can't speak Portuguese, of course. ■

FACT

Show do Milhão was axed when an officially licensed version of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* started airing (though it was obviously called *Quem Quer Ser um Milionário?* instead).

SHOW DO MILHÃO VOLUME 2

Year	2002
Publisher	Tec Toy
Developer	Tec Toy

THE SHOW DO Milhão game sold well enough to warrant a follow-up. Whereas the first game offered 600 questions, this sequel features 1,000 brand new ones, and given that you only get a maximum of 16 questions in a playthrough (if you're good enough to reach the one million), that's quite a lifespan. This was the last game Tec Toy released for the Mega Drive in Brazil, which is a fun stat in itself, but also marks a far more important milestone: Show do Milhão Volume 2 was the last officially licensed Mega Drive game released in any region. Yes, Sega's 16-bit era ended 14 years after it began with a Brazilian game about a *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* knock-off. Hell of a way to go. ■

FACT

The show's lifelines were different from *Millionaire's*: as well as Ask the Audience, contestants could also get a different question, ask three university students or pick a playing card to eliminate some wrong answers.

SIDE POCKET

Year	1992
Publisher	Data East / Sega
Developer	Data East

THE FIRST GAME in the Side Pocket trilogy was originally an arcade game before it was ported to the Mega Drive. The main mode, simply called Pocket, has you progressing through five cities – Los Angeles, Las Vegas, San Francisco, New York and Atlantic City – with each giving you a set points target to hit in order to progress. If that isn't enough for you there's also the option to play a game of nine-ball pool against a human or CPU opponent (in either a 3-game, 7-game or 15-game series), as well as a special Trick Shot mode where you have to try and clear 19 different elaborate shots. There are six different types of 'English' (spin), which may seem excessive but is essential during trick shots. ■

FACT

US magazine *Game Players* listed a Mega CD version of Side Pocket in its release schedule for November 1994, but it was never released.

THE SIMPSONS: BART VS THE SPACE MUTANTS

Year	1992
Publisher	Flying Edge
Developer	Arc Developments

WHILE OUT LATE one night, Bart Simpson notices a pair of aliens standing in front of a spaceship and discussing world domination. Since he's the only one who can see them (because of his special x-ray specs), it's up to Bart to save the day. There are five stages, each focusing on a different object the aliens need to build their ultimate weapon. On the streets of Springfield Bart has to cover up or destroy anything purple, while at the Springfield Shopping Mall he has to collect any hats he can see. At Krustyland Amusement Park it's balloons, while at the Museum of Natural History it's exit signs. Finally, the last stage sees Bart at the Nuclear Power Plant collecting power rods. ■

FACT

Beat the game and Bart's head is added to Mount Rushmore. Get Game Over and he's put in jail (complete with an image taken from the Deep, Deep Trouble music video).

THE SIMPSONS: BART'S NIGHTMARE

Year	1993
Publisher	Flying Edge
Developer	Sculptured Software

ONE NIGHT, WHILE working on a school assignment, Bart falls asleep at his desk. The scattered pages of his assignment are blowing around in Windy World (a dream version of Springfield) so Bart has to get them all back before he wakes up, otherwise he'll get a bad grade. Jumping on a page will take you to one of five mini-games: wrecking a city as Bartzilla, exploring the Temple of Maggie, flying above the skies in a side-scrolling shoot 'em up as Bartman, trying to survive in an Itchy & Scratchy cartoon and swimming around Bart's own bloodstream while using a bicycle pump to burst viruses. As you do. There are eight pages in total: the more you have when Bart wakes up, the better his grade will be. ■

FACT

'Bart's Nightmare' was also the name of one of the early short Simpsons cartoons on *The Tracey Ullman Show* in the late '80s. They're unrelated, though: that one was about eating cookies.

SKELETON KREW

Year	1995
Publisher	Core Design
Developer	Core Design

IT IS THE year 2062, and apparently nobody can spell anymore. A former mortician called Moribund Kadaver takes over a former cryogenics plant in MonstroCity and sets up a new factory that produces deadly mutants called Psykogenix. A group of bio-mechanical mercenaries called the Skeleton Krew head out to gun down all of Kadaver's mutants then take him out of the equation too. Sorry, I mean the ekwation. The Skeleton Krew – who are named Rib, Spine and Joint, because of course they are – can rotate freely around the waist, meaning you can hold the B button down to start shooting then press A or C to rotate left or right, allowing you to spread bullets accurately without having to move to adjust your aim. ■

FACT

The Amiga version's manual includes a short comic (sorry, komik) illustrated by James Ryman, who would go on to create art for card games like Magic: The Gathering and Hearthstone.

SKITCHIN'

Year	1994
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Developer	Electronic Arts

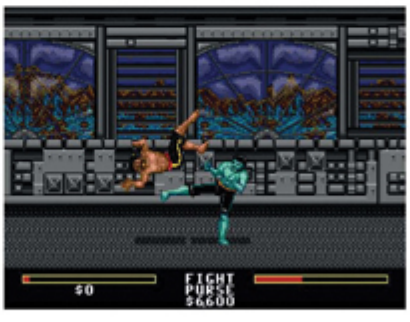
SKITCHIN' IS AN interesting spin-off of the Road Rash series. While it uses the same game engine as Road Rash and looks pretty much identical as a result, the obvious difference is that rather than riding motorbikes, all the racers in this game are wearing rollerblades instead. That may not sound like a very fast alternative, and you'd be right, but that's where the 'skitching' element comes into play: by standing in the middle of the road and holding your arm out to the side, you can grab onto passing cars and trucks and cling to the back to them to hitch a ride. You can then 'slingshot' yourself off them for a speed boost. A master Skitchin' player, then, is someone who can slingshot themselves forward from car to car. ■

FACT

A Stichin' magazine ad read 'skatin', hitching' bitchin' skitchin'', which led to an awkard moment in *GamePro* magazine where an EA publicist had to explain to a 12-year-old reader why they weren't swearing at him.

SLAUGHTER SPORT

Year	1990
Publisher	Razorsoft
Developer	Sanritsu



HEAVEN FORBID THAT anyone enters the Blood Pit. As if the fact you would willingly enter an arena where the only way to escape is via a fight to the death isn't bad enough, there's also the fact that you saw the name Blood Pit and didn't realise it's probably not the best place to walk into. Regardless, you're here now, and you have to fight your way through 16 opponents in order to please Mondu the Fat, the Lord of the Fight Palaces. As you win each fight you'll gain money that can be spent on power-ups to hinder your next opponent, such as a spiked board that appears above their head to stop them jumping. The incredibly sluggish controls make Shaq Fu look like God of War. ■

FACT

The PC version of the game was called Tongue of the Fatman, and even though the game is bad you've got to give a title like that some credit.

THE SMURFS

Year 1995
Publisher Infogrames
Developer Infogrames

THE DASTARDLY GARGAMEL has come up with a plan to kidnap all the Smurfs, and this time it isn't a false promise: as proof of concept, he's already nabbed Jokey Smurf, Brainy Smurf, Greedy Smurf and Smurfette. It's up to Hefty Smurf to go on a mission to find and rescue his Smurf pals, because if he completely smurfs it up, then Gargamel is probably going to smurf them pretty bad. And if that sounds offensive, then it's only because your own brain made it that way. While rescuing Smurfette is the last thing you do before the credits, rescuing the other three will add them to your party and allow you to play as them. While most of the game is standard platform fare there's also a nifty sledging section. ■

FACT

The French version was bundled with a random little figure of one of the four Smurflings (Nat, Snappy, Slouchy and Sassette). If you can still find one in the blister pack with the figure, good job.

THE SMURFS TRAVEL THE WORLD

Year 1996
Publisher Infogrames
Developer Infogrames

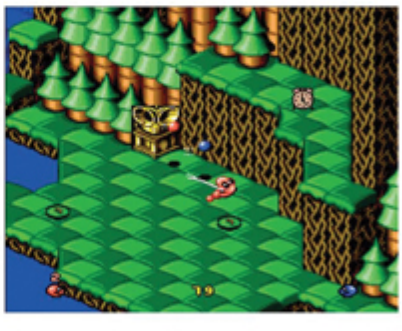
HEY, DO YOU remember Inquisitive Smurf? Probably not, because The Smurfs Travel the World appears to be the only media he's ever existed in. That didn't stop him becoming the co-hero of this platform game, though, in which he shares the spotlight with Smurfette. After the pair sneak into Papa Smurf's lab and accidentally break the mysterious Magic Crystal, they find themselves teleported across the world. They now have to explore a South American jungle, the North Pole, a North American desert, an African village, the Australian outback and an Asian temple to find the shards of crystal they need to repair the thing and get them back to the Smurf Village. That'll teach them to smurf around where they shouldn't be smurfing. ■

FACT

Smurfette was created by Gargamel to infiltrate the Smurf Village, but she loved it so much Papa Smurf cast a spell to make her a real Smurf. This also changed her hair from brunette to blonde, because reasons.

SNAKE RATTLE 'N' ROLL

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Rare



SNAKE RATTLE 'N' Roll began life as an NES game in 1990. This Mega Drive port was only released in Europe and is more or less the same, save for a fairly minor graphical upgrade and an extra level. The game follows two snakes named Rattle (the red one) and Roll (the blue one) as they try to reach the exits of 12 stages. The problem is, in order to open the exit door they need to slither onto a scale and ring its bell, but they're not heavy enough to do that. In each stage, then, Rattle and/or Roll (there's a co-op mode) have to eat as many little balls called Nibbley Pibbleys as they can: this helps them gain weight and ring the bell. ■

FACT

The back of the box spins some sort of yarn about a Bigfoot's army stealing a magic flag from the planet Serpentine, and Rattle and Roll heading off to recover it. There was nothing like this in the NES game.

SOCKET

Year 1993
Publisher Vic Tokai
Developer Vic Tokai

SOCKET IS A 'duck with attitude' who happens to be extremely fast and is coloured blue. Now, I know what you're thinking… and you'd be right to do so, because Socket is extremely similar to Sonic the Hedgehog, right down to the springboards dotted around each stage and the various sloped surfaces he runs along. It's not completely bereft of original ideas, however: Socket's main gimmick (and the reason for his name) is that his tail is actually a power cord, and he plugs it into a socket at the start of each stage to literally charge up his health. While taking damage obviously affects his energy, simply moving around causes it to fall too, meaning Socket has to keep collecting lightning bolt symbols to top it up. ■

FACT

According to the cover: 'Socket is one bad duck. He's so fast that he can turn out the lights and get out of the room before it gets dark.' Considering he's got electricity flowing through him, that's believable.

SOL-DEACE

Year 1992
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Wolf Team

KNOWN AS SOL-FEACE outside of North America but renamed for no real discernible reason, Sol-Deace is a horizontally scrolling shoot 'em up set roughly around the year 3300 (because apparently by then the world doesn't refer to our current solar calendar). A super computer called GCS-WT rules the human population, and kills anyone who dissents. This fate befell top scientist Dr Edwin Deace, but not before he could create Sol-Deace, a revolutionary new space fighter that might just be good enough to take down GCS-WT. The game itself doesn't do anything truly remarkable – there's only a single shot button, rapid fire is on as standard and you can adjust the angle of your secondary shots by moving forwards and backwards – but it still delivers a solid shoot 'em up. ■

FACT

'In the great whirlpool of light and heat, the tragedy of blood and oil begins,' reads the back of the box. Steady on a bit.

SONIC COMPILATION

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

SEGA MAY HAVE had its own Mega Games collections but the vast majority of them were noticeably Sonic-free. After all, why include an 'evergreen' game that new console buyers would purchase on its own anyway? Come the summer of 1995 this finally changed with Sonic Compilation, which included no fewer than three Sonic games on one cartridge: Sonic the Hedgehog, Sonic the Hedgehog 2 and… um, Dr Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine. Logic would have obviously dictated that the cartridge would have been better served as some sort of Sonic Trilogy with the first three games included but let's face it: Sonic 3 was only a year old by this point so including it would have been jumping the gun a bit. Let's allow it, then. ■

FACT

Sonic Compilation was eventually released in the US in 1997 and renamed Sonic Classics. There was still no sign of Sonic 3 in it, though.

SONIC 3D BLAST

Year 1996
Publisher Sega
Developer Traveller's Tales

THE LAST SONIC game released on the Mega Drive (thanks for that, alphabetical order) went in a very different direction from the others and ditched the tried and tested 2D side-scrolling platforming for an isometric viewpoint instead. Sonic 3D Blast (known as Sonic 3D: Flickies' Island in Europe) was handled by UK studio Traveller's Tales and sees Sonic travelling to the mysterious Flicky Island in search of the Chaos Emeralds, because he's heard there's a tie between the emeralds and the Flicky birds that inhabit the island. When he gets there he discovers that Dr Robotnik clearly heard the same thing and got there first, trapping the Flickies in robot shells and turning them into Badniks (you know, his usual routine). Sonic's task is simple, then: travel through each of the island's seven zones, rescue all the Flickies he can find by smashing up their Badnik bodies, guide them to their special Dimension Rings – which the Flickies can enter to safely hide in their own Flicky dimension – and try to collect all the Chaos Emeralds along the way to stop Robotnik getting them. When Sonic defeats an enemy its freed Flicky will follow behind him (similar to the little chicks in Sega's own Flicky game): they'll continue to do so until he can safely get them to the Dimension Ring. If Sonic takes a hit, though, they'll scatter much like his rings, and he'll have to gather them up safely again before he can rescue them and finish the stage. ■

FACT

Sonic 3D Blast launched on the Saturn just a couple of months after the Mega Drive release. Although it clearly looks better, the change isn't as vast as you'd expect given the power difference.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Sonic Team

IF THE MEGA Drive was to have any chance of competing with Nintendo's immensely popular systems (especially in the west), there were no two ways about it: Sega was going to have to come up with something to rival Mario. The solution was Sonic the Hedgehog, a blue erinaceid (that's right) with the ability to run at obscenely fast speeds. Sonic was everything that Mario wasn't, and that worked in Sega's favour when appealing to a teenage market. While Nintendo's hero was a round, cuddly everyman you would happily invite home for dinner to charm the family, Sonic was a spiky, streetwise anthropomorph with attitude: the sort of guy you'd happily skip school with, but would be too scared to bring to your house in case he dropped a four-letter word in front of your mum. It's no accident that Sonic embodied the Mega Drive itself: the console's main advantage over Nintendo's hardware was the speed of its processor (its CPU's clock speed was more than twice that of the SNES), so it was only natural that its mascot would be a character whose main power perfectly exhibited the system's abilities. It didn't hurt that the game itself – in which Sonic had to travel through seven distinct zones to defeat the evil Dr Robotnik and rescue his animal friends from their robotic shells – was excellent, earning rave reviews across the board. Sega's plans had paid off and the Mega Drive finally had the killer app that made it a realistic challenger for Nintendo's crown. ■

FACT

This wasn't actually Sonic's first appearance. In Rad Mobile, an arcade game released five months earlier, a little Sonic toy can be seen swinging from the rear view mirror.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Sonic Team

ONE OF THE benefits of marketing the Mega Drive to slightly older gamers was that some of them were likely to have younger brothers or sisters who were keen to take an interest in what their older siblings were doing. Whether deliberately or not, this made Tails – a younger, cuddlier companion to Sonic – the perfect addition to the second Sonic the Hedgehog game. The pair have to stop Dr Robotnik again, who this time is trying to harness the power of the Chaos Emeralds to activate his flying Death Egg ship. The most notable new addition to gameplay was the Spin Dash move: while before Sonic had to build speed through momentum, the Spin Dash would give him an instant burst of speed from a standing start. When players are going it solo, an AI Tails follows behind Sonic, picking up extra rings along the way and getting into his own scrapes. If a second player is around, they can pick up a controller and control Tails directly, allowing them to come along for the ride.

Alternatively, a new split-screen multiplayer race mode allowed players to compete against each other, if teamwork didn't happen to be on the table that day. Sonic 2 was released in both North America and Europe on Tuesday 24 November 1992, a day dubbed 'Sonic 2's Day' by Sega. This was a particularly special event because at the time it was extremely rare for a game to be released on the same day 'worldwide' (even though Japan actually got it three days earlier). ■

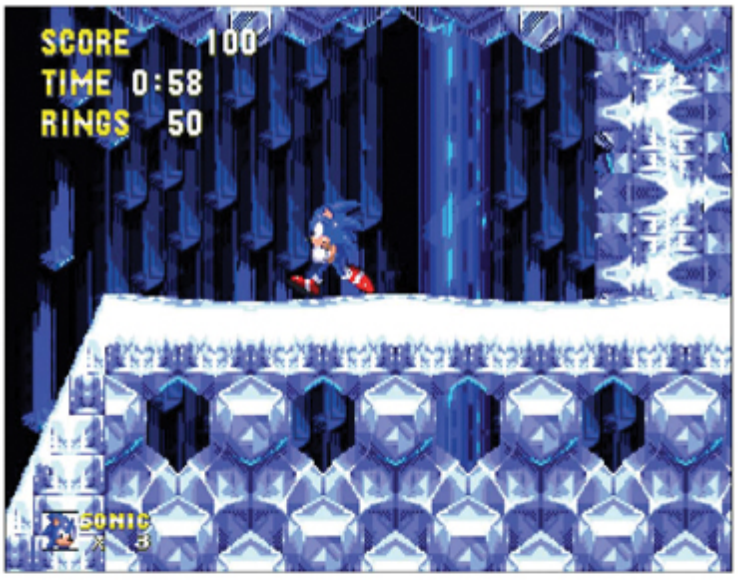
FACT

It's well-known that Tails's full name is Miles 'Tails' Prower, but you'd be surprised how many people still haven't realised that his name is a pun on 'miles per hour'.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 3

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Sonic Team

IF YOU THOUGHT Sega was going to draw a line under its most successful series after just two games, that's just crazy talk. Sonic 3 was to be the most ambitious game in the series yet, with double the number of zones seen in the previous games and each zone planned to be much larger. It soon became clear that – due to the combination of a tight deadline and a cart size that would have been expensive to manufacture – the original plan for Sonic 3 wasn't going to work out, so Sega decided to split the game into two parts. The first part would simply be presented as Sonic the Hedgehog 3, while the team would continue working on the second part and release it further down the line. Sonic 3 introduces Knuckles, a razor-fisted echidna who's been tricked by Dr Robotnik into believing that Sonic is coming to steal the Chaos Emeralds that power Knuckles' floating island. Knuckles spends most of the game trying to make things difficult for Sonic and Tails, completely unaware that Robotnik is just using him to distract Sonic while he steals the emeralds to repair the fallen Death Egg. Sonic is armed with a new Insta-Shield move: by tapping the jump button again while in mid air he can make a wave of energy appear around him that protects him briefly. Meanwhile, Tails' flying ability can now be controlled directly by the player, giving him a distinctly different feel compared to playing as Sonic. ■



FACT

It's well known that Michael Jackson helped create some of Sonic 3's music, but the Ice Cap Zone theme is actually an unreleased 1982 song called Hard Times by The Jetzons, whose keyboardist Brad Buxer also worked on Sonic 3.

SONIC & KNUCKLES

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Sonic Team

THE SECOND PART of Sonic 3 came just eight months later in the form of Sonic & Knuckles. This time Knuckles – who discovers at one point during this game that Robotnik's been tricking him – is available to choose as a playable character, bringing with him a bunch of new skills including the ability to both glide through the air and use his knuckles to climb up vertical walls. While technically a standalone game in its own right, Sonic & Knuckles's big selling point was its special 'lock-on technology', which meant the cartridge had its own cartridge port on the top. This meant you could plug Sonic 3 into the top of it and get Sonic 3 & Knuckles, essentially giving you the full-sized adventure Sega had planned on releasing in the first place, starting off as Sonic 3 then continuing straight onto the Sonic & Knuckles stages. Locking on with Sonic 3 also allows you to play as Knuckles in the Sonic 3 stages, opening up new sections and bosses that previously weren't accessible with Sonic or Tails. As if the Sonic 3 integration wasn't enough, the cartridge's lock-on technology also works with the first two Sonic games. Adding Sonic 2 makes Knuckles fully playable in that game too, gliding and climbing abilities and all. Meanwhile, adding Sonic 1 brings up a message claiming that it doesn't work, but pressing A, B and C at the same time brings up Blue Sphere, a hidden game which consists of 134 million(!) levels of the bonus stage from Sonic 3. ■

FACT

You can actually insert any game into Sonic & Knuckles and almost all of them will bring up a different Blue Sphere level. Oh, and if you insert another copy of Sonic & Knuckles it just plays the game normally.

SONIC SPINBALL

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

DR ROBOTNIK HAS built a new volcano hideaway called the Veg-O-Fortress, where he's turning woodland creatures into robotic slaves (again). Obviously Sonic is there to save the day as ever, but this time things are a little different: he has to enter the bottom of the volcano and work his way through the hideout, nabbing all its Chaos Emeralds along the way. Oh, and he's got to do it as a pinball, because why not. Sonic Spinball plays somewhat similarly to the pinball sections in the main series, such as the Casino Night Zone in Sonic 2. While using the flippers is obviously the most immediate and effective way of controlling Sonic, you can still slightly move him in mid-air (though not to the extent you can in the main games). ■

FACT

The Spinball Whizzer roller coaster at UK theme park Alton Towers was renamed the Sonic Spinball between 2010 and 2015. It was decorated in red and blue paint, and Sonic music played during the ride.

SORCERER'S KINGDOM

Year 1992
Publisher Treco
Developer Nippon Computer Systems

YOU ARE A young boy born in the town of Landale. Yes, you personally. The King of Landale has summoned you and asked you to head out into the world, defeat the monsters that have started appearing and maybe find out what happened to your missing dad. That's about as complex as the plot gets in this straightforward RPG from developer NCS. It does have one or two interesting mechanics, most notable of which is the lack of an experience system. Instead of gaining general XP and increasing all your stats each time you level up, the game targets your specific actions and rewards those accordingly: if you use magic more than you perform physical attacks, for example, your magic points may increase but your fighting power may remain unchanged. ■

FACT

The Japanese version was published by Masaya. This was a video game publishing brand set up by Nippon Computer Systems in 1984, so it's actually NCS itself.

SPACE HARRIER II

Year 1989
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

SPACE HARRIER WAS one of Sega's most well-loved arcade games in the '80s, and remains an immensely popular title in the company's history to this day. While this Mega Drive sequel isn't necessarily held to such a high standard, the fact it released alongside the console in both Japan and North America made it a strong launch title from a brand recognition point of view. It's set in the completely arbitrary year 6236 and, as in its predecessor, you play as the titular Space Harrier as you run and fly your jetpack through Fantasyland (not the Disneyland region). There are twelve stages in total, and one simple goal: get to the end of each one by gunning down as many enemies as you can and staying out of the line of fire. ■

FACT

Your score racks up in Space Harrer II as you simply progress through each stage. When you reach a boss this doesn't stop, so you can max out your score if you're good enough to keep dodging its attack.

SPACE INVADERS 91

Year 1991
Publisher Taito
Developer Taito

THERE ARE FEWER titles more iconic in the history of gaming than Taito's legendary 1978 arcade game Space Invaders. However, because of its age there are fewer titles more basic than Space Invaders either. That's why this Mega Drive port – released a mere 13 years after the original – gives the game a complete graphical and mechanical overhaul. Gone are the four bases that used to protect your ship: now your ship has a number of shields, which essentially act like an energy meter. Take too many hits and you'll explode, naturally. As you progress through each stage you'll also see a variety of enemy layouts rather than the standard 'grid': to help you out you can collect a variety of power-ups from lasers to a time freeze. ■

FACT

Space Invaders 91 was released in Japan a year earlier, so naturally it was called Space Invaders 90 there. It didn't come to Brazil until much later, so in that region it was simply called Space Invaders.

SPARKSTER: ROCKET KNIGHT ADVENTURES 2

Year 1994
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

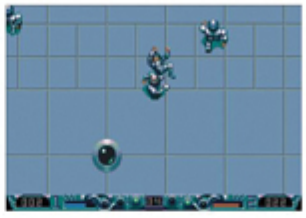
THE SEQUEL TO Rocket Knight Adventures tells of the rise of the evil Gedol empire as it takes over the land of Elhorn. When the King of Gedol is told about Sparkster, he orders his troops to have him destroyed. Sparkster, then, must travel through six stages, ploughing through Gedol soldiers along the way, in an attempt to reach and defeat the King. The general gameplay is much the same as that of the first game, though the main difference is in Sparkster's trademark rocket attack. In the first game you had to hold down the standard attack button to charge it up, then let go to fire Sparkster forwards. This can now be done at the press of the C button, and charges much quicker. ■

FACT

If you skip the intro with the Start button you'll actually miss a boss fight. If you win that fight you'll get one of the Seven Swords you need for the best ending, so impatience be damned.

SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE

Year 1991
Publisher Arena Entertainment
Developer The Bitmap Brothers



THERE WERE MANY futuristic sports games in the '80s and '90s, but Speedball 2 was arguably the most popular in Europe due to its huge success on home computers like the Amiga, Atari ST and Commodore 64. This Mega Drive port is a strong rendition: set in the year 2105, the sport involved is a mix between handball, pinball and hockey. The handball element is the most central: players carry the ball and can score points by throwing it through their opponent's goal. The pinball element lies in the numerous bumpers, targets and ramps they can throw the ball through to score further points. Finally, the hockey element is in the violence: players can plough into opponents with meaty tackles and leave them sprawling on the floor. ■

FACT

The name Brutal Deluxe refers to the default team in the game's league mode. They're a new team at the bottom of the league and you have to guide them to the top of the table.

SPIDER-MAN

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Western Technologies

ACCLAIM'S USE OF the Spider-Man licence is generally associated with its two beat 'em ups Maximum Carnage and Separation Anxiety, but this platformer – also known as Spider-Man: The Animated Series – has something of a following too. The plot is simple: there's been a mass breakout at the maximum security Ravencroft Institute, and a whole bunch of Spider-Man's former nemeses (including Doctor Octopus, the Green Goblin, Mysterio, Venom, Lizard, Rhino and more) have escaped. They all have to be re-defeated over the course of five stages: a lab, Coney Island, the Deconstruction Zone, the mean streets and Ravencroft itself. On occasion the Fantastic Four turn up to give Spidey a hand, because truth be told, they apparently weren't up to much. ■

FACT

The 1994 animated series this game is based on starred Christopher Daniel Barnes as the voice of Spider-Man. Twenty years later, Barnes would voice Spidey villains Electro and Vulture in the Spider-Man Unlimited mobile game.

SPIDER-MAN VS THE KINGPIN

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Technopop

SIMPLY REFERRED TO as Spider-Man on the box, Spider-Man vs the Kingpin has the webslinger racing to find and defuse a hidden bomb in New York, which the Kingpin has declared was planted by Spidey himself. As you make your way through its seven side-scrolling stages you'll come across boss fights against the likes of Dr Octopus, Venom, the Hobgoblin, Sandman (who can be defeated by attacking a fire hydrant and literally washing him away), Electro, the Lizard and the infamous Random Man Driving A Forklift Truck™. Brilliantly, you also have a camera with a strictly limited number of shots in it: if you can get a photo of each boss, J. Jonah Jameson will pay you big bucks which you can use to improve your web fluid. ■

FACT

According to the résumé of producer Randel B. Reiss, Marvel had been ready to pull its licence with Sega but when two-thirds of Genesis owners bought this game, Marvel changed its mind.

SPIDER-MAN AND VENOM: MAXIMUM CARNAGE

Year 1994
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Software Creations

THE FIRST OF two beat 'em ups starring Spider-Man and Venom (you can find the other under V), Maximum Carnage sees the two arch-rivals reluctantly teaming up to take on a greater foe: the devastating Carnage, who's also brought some of his similarly terrifying pals like Shriek, Doppelganger, Demogoblin and Carrion along for the ride. Although you initially play as Spider-Man, before long you get the chance to switch to Venom should you so wish. Although Spidey's faster, Venom is stronger (though their movesets are near-identical so it's not a massive toss-up). Along the way players can find nine special items that call on other Marvel superheroes to jump in and help out: these include the likes of Captain America, Ironfist, Black Cat and Cloak and Dagger. ■

FACT

TV shopping network QVC sold a limited edition version of Maximum Carnage. Limited to just 5,000, it came with a copy of the game, three character pins and a hardback version of the *Spider-Man: Carnage* comic series.

SPIDER-MAN AND THE X-MEN IN ARCADE'S REVENGE

Year 1993
Publisher Flying Edge
Developer Software Creations

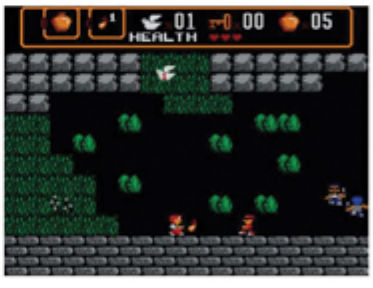
WHEN YOU'VE GOT a supervillain whose gimmick is putting his victims through a series of elaborate traps called Murderworld, it would be downright wrong not to make a video game about him. Naturally, the Murderworld name has been dropped here but the idea remains: Spider-Man and some of his X-Men chums – Wolverine, Storm, Cyclops and Gambit – each have to escape a different part of Arcade's deadly amusement park before finally teaming up to take on the big guy himself. Once you clear the first stage with Spider-Man (which involves defusing bombs) you then get to choose which order to take on the X-Men stages: Storm's underwater maze, Wolverine's funhouse, Gambit's escape from a giant spiked ball and Cyclops' minecart rollercoaster. ■

FACT

Arcade first appeared in 1978, where he tried to kill Spider-Man and Captain Britain in Murderworld. It may surprise you to learn he didn't manage it.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Year 1994
Publisher Wisdom Tree
Developer Wisdom Tree



THIS IS A port of Christian developer Wisdom Tree's most ambitious NES game, which is essentially a religious take on The Legend of Zelda. You play as a soldier of the army of the Lord, and your role is to explore 'a modern city' as you try to collect the full 'armour of God': that's the Belt of Truth, Breastplate of Righteousness(!), Boots of the Gospel, Helmet of Salvation, Sword of the Spirit and Shield of Faith, of course. Along the way you'll come across 'unsaved souls', who you must convert by throwing fruit at them. Because nothing convinces someone to listen to the Word of God like smacking a pear off their jaw. Brilliantly, the final boss fight is actually against Satan himself. ■

FACT

The game's apparently based on Ephesians 6:13–18. I'm paraphrasing here but it's about putting on 'the full armour of God' so you can stand your ground when the day of evil comes.

SPIROU

Year 1995
Publisher Infogrames
Developer Infogrames

BASED ON THE popular Franco-Belgian comic *Spirou & Fantasio*, Spirou is a side-scrolling platform game in which you play as the titular journalist. At an international scientific research conference in New York, the great inventor Count Champignac is about to reveal the secret of his inventions, when he's kidnapped by the evil Cyanida, who wants to steal his inventions so she can take control of robots and use them to enslave humankind. Overhearing this and deciding he doesn't fancy a piece of it, Spirou and his faithful doggy chum Spip decide to rescue the Count in a run-of-the-mill but beautifully animated platform game. Along the way Spirou can use some of the Count's inventions: for example, the Micropulser lets him shrink enemies, while the Sandotron lets him turn stone obstacles into sand. ■

FACT

When Spirou was originally created in 1938 he was an elevator operator and bellboy at a hotel. Eventually this was changed and he became a reporter, but he kept his old uniform.

SPLATTERHOUSE 2

Year 1992
Publisher Namco
Developer Now Production

THE ORIGINAL SPLATTERHOUSE was an arcade and TurboGrafx-16 game about a pair of students, Rick and Jennifer, who end up trapped in a haunted house with the result being Jennifer's death. In the sequel Rick is summoned back to the house by the Terror Mask – the strange mystical mask that possessed Rick when he put it on and caused all this in the first place – with the suggestion that maybe Jennifer can be saved after all. Like its predecessor, Splatterhouse 2 is a very gory side-scrolling action game, where the masked Rick can use his newfound strength to punch enemies into pieces, or pick up weapons and cause even more damage (such as using a plank of wood to splat them against a wall). ■

FACT

It's interesting to consider the moral panic games like Mortal Kombat and Night Trap caused when Splatterhouse 2, released earlier, has a boss battle where you use a chainsaw to carve open a zombie baby on a noose.

SPLATTERHOUSE 3

Year 1993
Publisher Namco
Developer Now Production

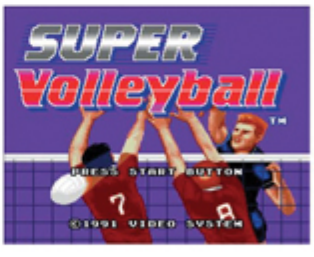
THE THIRD AND 'final' Splatterhouse game was set around five years after the events of Splatterhouse 2. Rick and Jennifer fell in love and got married, and now Rick is a successful Wall Street businessman with a mansion. On returning home one day, Rick discovers that the mansion has been taken over by monsters, and both Jennifer and their son David have been kidnapped. Time to get that mask out again. Whereas the first two games were strictly side-scrolling affairs, this threequel is more of a free-roaming beat 'em up, where Rick explores the house while killing its monster infiltrators. Rick can now also build up a power meter: when triggering it the mask fuses to his head and he becomes even more powerful. ■

FACT

A reimagining of the original Splatterhouse launched on the PS3 and Xbox 360 in 2010. It included the first three Splatterhouse games as unlockable extras.

SPORT GAMES

Year 1998
Publisher Tec Toy
Developer Various



THIS COMPILATION CARTRIDGE was only released in Brazil, courtesy of Sega's Brazilian distributor Tec Toy. It contains three sports games on one cartridge, and while the selection may be considered a little odd to some, it's actually well suited to Brazilian tastes. World Championship Soccer II is a given, since Brazilians clearly love their football. What's less well known is that volleyball and basketball are also very popular in Brazil, which explains why the other two games included are Super Volleyball and Super Real Basketball. Rather than other multi-game compilations where you're presented with a menu, this time one of the games boots up when you turn on the Mega Drive, and to cycle between games you have to turn the power off and on again. ■

FACT

The manual opens by asking what do you like to do in your spare time, be that playing video games, playing sports, enjoying nature etc. The twist is that the correct answer is all of the above: it's a message about game/life balance, you see.

SPORTS TALK BASEBALL

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

A FEW MONTHS after Joe Montana II: Sports Talk Football brought full commentary to a Sega sports game for the first time, Sega decided to try and make lightning strike twice again by doing the same with baseball. Luckily, it already had a Japanese baseball game called Pro Yakyuu Super League '91 sitting ready and complete, so Sega took that game, removed its in-game music and replaced it with speech (with help from Western Technologies, who created the speech in Joe Montana II). Once again Lon Simmons provides commentary for this game, which contains fully licensed players (but no team logo licensing) and the option to play a 15, 30, 81 or full 162-game season. Despite its lack of MLB branding, Sports Talk baseball is considered one of the better 16-bit baseball games. ■

FACT

Because Lon Simmons returned as the commentator, Western Technologies was able to use a lot of existing lines from Sports Talk Football, like city names and basic phrases like numbers.

SPOT GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

Year 1995
Publisher Virgin Games
Developer Eurocom

COOL SPOT MAY be fondly remembered as one of the most iconic platform games of the 16-bit era, but it's fair to say that its sequel Spot Goes to Hollywood is barely mentioned by comparison. As the name suggests, it sees Spot travelling through a series of stages based on Hollywood movies: there's a pirate ship, an Indiana Jones style jungle, a haunted house and a sci-fi section. Whereas its predecessor was a standard side-scrolling platform game, the action here has an isometric viewpoint, meaning Spot can travel in eight directions. The aim remains similar, though: you have to collect a certain number of red dots in each stage while firing bubbles at any enemies who have the sheer gall to get in your way. ■

FACT

There's a hidden mini-game if you enter the password PROGRESS then pause while playing the game and spell out ARDBLUBBA with the controller buttons. This gives you a slot machine with photos of the programmers' faces.

S.S. LUCIFER: MAN OVERBOARD!

Year 1994
Publisher Codemasters
Developer Odysseus Software

THE STEAMSHIP SS *Lucifer* has hit an iceberg and is rapidly gaining water, and it's full of panic-stricken passengers running around blindly with no idea where to go. Playing as a heroic chap called Kevin Codner (yes, I know), you have to methodically make your way through 100 rooms on the ship, guiding everyone to the exit. And when I say guiding, I mean it: the passengers don't have a mind of their own and will wander blindly into danger if you don't lay out a very deliberate path for them to follow. It's basically a fancier version of Lemmings, then, in which the 'cursor' assigning the Lemmings roles has been replaced by a single platforming hero who carries out all the actions himself. ■

FACT

The game was known as Sink or Swim! on all other formats, including the SNES. It's not entirely clear why it was renamed for only the Mega Drive version.

STAR CONTROL

Year 1991
Publisher Accolade
Developer Toys for Bob

'EXPERIENCE KILLER COMBAT in the 27th century!' So claims the box blurb for Star Control, an unlicensed Mega Drive game where interstellar warfare is the order of the day. Players join the Alliance of Free Stars and have to defend themselves against the evil Ur-Quan Hierarchy. It's part strategy game, part action game: players initially move their ships from star to star while fortifying, colonising and mining until they're engaged with an enemy, at which point the action switches to a more arcade style combat system where you can fire at will while gravity and inertia affect your ship's movement. The Mega Drive version has 15 scenarios to play through, which is six more than the original Amiga version released a year earlier. ■

FACT

The cover was painted by legendary fantasy artist Boris Vallejo (who also painted the covers for Ecco the Dolphin and Golden Axe II). Players could send away for a poster of the art.

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE: CROSSROADS OF TIME

Year 1995
Publisher Playmates Interactive
Developer Novotrade

IT'S PROBABLY QUITE fitting that the *Star Trek* series, occasionally criticised for its plodding pace, would be the one whose video game adaptation included a large helping of walking around the ship, talking to people. Saboteurs have infiltrated Deep Space Nine, so playing mainly as Commander Sisko (although Odo, Major Kira and Dr Bashir get an occasional look-in too) you embark on an investigation that ends up getting so complicated it includes time travel, because of course it does. The game generally consists of two styles: the aforementioned 'walking and talking' sections where you slowly figure out what's going on, and action scenes where you get to bust out the phasers. ■

FACT

According to lead designer Maurice Molyneux, the game's design document had to be submitted six weeks before the pilot episode of *Deep Space Nine* even aired. Which was challenging.

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION: ECHOES FROM THE PAST

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer MicroProse

KNOWN AS FUTURE'S Past on the SNES and named differently on the Genesis for no apparent reason, the 16-bit take on The Next Generation tells the story of the USS *Enterprise* and an evil Romulan force racing each other to reach the Integrated Field Derandomiser, which can reshape matter and energy. The game is mainly split into three parts: decision-making on the bridge, top-down space combat and exploration sections on the surface of planets. The Mega Drive version is noticeably better than its SNES counterpart, as one of its major elements – diplomatic sections where you reason with various others and can affect the course of the game as a result – is completely missing from the Nintendo version. ■

FACT

Sega's marketing manager told the UK's *Sega Magazine* that the game never launched there because the 16-meg cart would have made the game cost £59.99, and they didn't think it would have been value for money.

STARFLIGHT

Year 1991
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Binary Systems

STARFLIGHT MADE ITS debut on the IBM PC back in 1986, before getting a Mega Drive port a full five years later. Despite the half-decade gap, the game's scope was no less impressive on Sega's system than it was on PC. It's an early sandbox game in which the player operates a starship, creating the commander and their crew and then simply exploring space at their own pace. While there's an overarching plot about an ancient race of creatures trying to destroy everything, the game's main selling point is its 800 planets and 270 star systems, many of which can be landed on and explored. There are also nine alien races to find and make contact with, each with their own personalities and cultures. This is a huge game. ■

FACT

If there was any more evidence needed that Starflight is a complex game, it comes with both a 144-page manual and a large poster showing the starmap.

STARGATE

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Probe Entertainment

BASED ON THE 1994 MGM movie of the same name (rather than the TV shows that followed), Stargate has you playing as Kurt Russell's character Colonel Jack O'Neil as he tries to defeat the evil ruler Ra and find a way to activate the mysterious Stargate so he and his men can get back home. Throughout his 30 missions, O'Neil can upgrade his standard machine gun with attachments that give him more rapid fire, a wider field of fire and a more efficient cooling system. The game was developed by Probe, and anyone who owned the SNES version of Alien 3 will be able to tell that it's running on a similar engine with familiar (albeit smoother) animations and similar combat controls: this is no bad thing, mind you. ■

FACT

The makers of Stargate were sued in 1996 by a high school teacher who claimed it was a rip-off of his own story, Egyptscape. It was settled out of court.

STEEL EMPIRE

Year 1992
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Hot B

IN AN ALTERNATIVE future, it has become the age of steel. The militant Motorhead Empire has enslaved the entire planet… except, that is, for the Republic of Silverhead, who have two aircraft left that could just save the day: the speedy Striker biplane, and the powerful Z-01 Zeppelin airship. Before you take on each of the seven stages in this inventive and unique shoot 'em up, you can choose which of the two aircraft to use. Both have the ability to fire both left and right (with the B and C buttons respectively), but while the Striker can drop bombs the Zeppelin has upward firing aerial mines. Rather than simply picking up weapon upgrades, you have to pick up EXP icons to level up your weapons. ■

FACT

Steel Empire was remade in 2014 for the Nintendo 3DS. It was critically acclaimed, with *Nintendo Life* in particular giving it 9/10.

STEEL TALONS

Year 1992
Publisher Tengen
Developer Polygames

WHEN IT LAUNCHED in arcades in 1991, Steel Talons made use of polygonal graphics to provide an immersive, 3D-style world in which the player – as a member of the army's elite Steel Talons chopper team – got to fly around, taking out the likes of tanks, anti-aircraft guns and other helicopters.

While the SNES port wisely decided to focus on the console's strengths and provided a game that was less visually impressive but still ran well, Polygames decided to bite the bullet and tried to make the Mega Drive version look as detailed and authentic as possible. The result is one of the worst frame rates in video game history, dropping as low as 5 frames per second at times and rendering the game nearly unplayable. ■

FACT

The game has a special co-pilot mode where one person controls the flight and the other aims the guns, just in case you wanted someone else to sympathise with you as you struggle to play it.

STORMLORD

Year 1991
Publisher RazorSoft
Developer Punk Development / Hewson

STORMLORD ENJOYED SOME success on home computers like the Amiga, Atari ST, C64 and ZX Spectrum before it was brought to the Mega Drive a couple of years later. You play as the titular Stormlord, who's been summoned to the Enchanted Realm to help rescue the various fairies who have been imprisoned by Badh the Crone (or simply Evil Rotting Crone, as the manual calls her). The game is an action platformer with object-swapping elements, similar to other games popular on home computers at the time (such as the Dizzy games). Stormlord needs to use certain objects to get past specific obstacles but he can only carry one object at a time, meaning there's a degree of backtracking as he tries to swap in the right object for each situation. ■

FACT

Sega refused to make the Stormlord carts until RazorSoft agreed (after a court case) to censor the naked fairy statues. You still hear a wolf whistle when you stand on them, though.

THE STORY OF THOR: A SUCCESSOR OF THE LIGHT

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Ancient

KNOWN IN NORTH America as Beyond Oasis, The Story of Thor – despite what the title says – is about a treasure hunter called Prince Ali, who comes across a special armlet made of gold. The armlet lets him control the spirits of water, fire, shadow and plant, and use their powers accordingly, but before he can do this he has to find them first. Once he does, he needs to find who's discovered a similar silver armlet. You see, that one has the power to create chaos and destruction, so that's not ideal. The Story of Thor is essentially Sega's answer to the Legend of Zelda series, with top-down exploration and numerous dungeons. Its combat system, meanwhile, feels almost more like a beat 'em up than an RPG. ■

FACT

If you're wondering what all of this has to do with Norse god Thor, you'd be right to: it's got absolutely nothing to do with him, or any other Thors for that matter.

STREET FIGHTER II': SPECIAL CHAMPION EDITION

Year 1993
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom

FOR MORE THAN a year Mega Drive owners had to sit stony-faced while their SNES-owning friends boasted about the fact that only they had Street Fighter II. Finally though, in the summer of 1993, Capcom released a special port that mixed Street Fighter II: Champion Edition and Street Fighter II' Turbo, providing all the benefits of both games (such as the ability to play as the four bosses, let two players choose the same fighter, and turn on turbo speed). The game's release was so iconic and Sega was so determined to get it right that the six-button controller for the Mega Drive was actually released specifically for Street Fighter II so that fans could enjoy the full Street Fighter experience without any compromises. ■

FACT

The Japanese version's intro shows a blonde white man punching a black man in the face (just like the arcade original). Perhaps wisely, Capcom changed it to two white men for the western Mega Drive release.

STREET RACER

Year 1995
Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Vivid Image

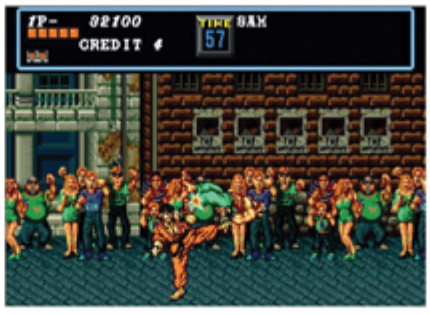
PITCHED TO THE press as a cross between Street Fighter and Mario Kart, Street Racer leans far more towards the latter. It's a karting game where the power-ups have been removed and instead each of the eight characters have melee moves, similar to something like Road Rash. The roster consists of eight stereotypes: there's a Japanese sumo wrestler, an American skinhead thug called Biff, a Frankenstein's monster and… um, an African voodoo doctor, whose character design hasn't aged well. What sets Street Racer apart from other kart games is its two unique modes: Rumble is like a giant sumo match where players have to knock everyone else out of the arena, whereas Soccer is a 4-on-4 football match where players have to drive the ball into the net. ■

FACT

Street Racer was released on the PlayStation and Saturn in 1996, and offered eight-player split-screen multiplayer. Which is probably too many, frankly.

STREET SMART

Year 1991
Publisher Treco
Developer Treco



STREET SMART IS an interesting cross between a one-on-one fighting game and a Final Fight style beat 'em up. Playing as either the technically-minded Karate Man or the power-focused Crusher, you fight against a series of opponents in large areas where you're able to freely walk around. Before each fight you'll be allowed to wager your winnings on whether you'll be able to beat the next fighter without dying. This has an effect on the ending when you win: if you have no money left you'll see your guy sitting shirtless in the gutter, but if you have a decent sum you'll end up in either a sports car with a girl or a luxury apartment with four girls, depending on how much you earned. ■

FACT

The arcade version let two players fight opponents 2-on-1. While the Genesis still supports two players, they take turns fighting each opponent then fight each other in a grudge match.

STREETS OF RAGE

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

ALTHOUGH THE ARCADE was the home of the beat 'em up and the place where so many classic examples were born – Final Fight, Golden Axe, Double Dragon and so on – it's perhaps a testament to the sheer quality of the Streets of Rage series that many consider it the pinnacle of the genre, despite having never been released in coin-op form. In the first game, a notorious crime syndicate run by the evil Mr X has taken over the streets (and lots of people are raging about it). The syndicate even includes certain parts of the police force, meaning law enforcement are making no real attempts to stop the chaos. Three officers – top boxer Adam Hunter, martial arts expert Axel Stone and judo master Blaze Fielding – have decided to quit the force and go vigilante in order to bring Mr X and his syndicate to justice. As

FACT

If you play in two-player co-op and reach Mr X, he'll ask you to join him. If one chooses Yes and the other chooses No, the players will fight each other. If the Yes player wins then beats Mr X, they become the new crime lord in a hidden 'bad ending'.

they fight their way through the game's eight stages, Adam, Blaze and Axel can occasionally call on fellow cops to assist them by driving up nearby and firing huge explosives at enemies, which seems a bit heavy-handed but there you go. Streets of Rage's success isn't down to a single element, it's a collection of brilliantly accomplished parts combining to make an even better whole. The fighting system is varied, landing hits is satisfying, enemies have their own distinct personalities and attack patterns, and Yuzo Koshiro's music is among the best you'll hear on any 16-bit system. ■

STREETS OF RAGE 2

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

IT MAY HAVE been considered madness to suggest that Streets of Rage could actually be bettered, but Streets of Rage 2 somehow managed to upstage its predecessor in every possible way, making it not only the best game in the series but also one of the best games on the Mega Drive as a whole. A year after the events of the first game, Adam is suddenly kidnapped by Mr X, making it clear that the crime syndicate is back and ready to cause even more havoc then before. Axel and Blaze team up with Adam's younger brother Skate and Axel's wrestler friend Max, and the quartet head out into the streets once again to punch as many faces as possible in their quests to find and rescue Adam while bringing down Mr X once and for all. Streets of Rage 2's improvements over the first game are countless, but most notable is the combat system, which offers a significantly wider range of moves. The addition of Skate and Max also make the roster feel more noticeably different: whereas the first game's trio had different strengths and weaknesses, they still felt similar to control: here, though, Skate's lightning fast speed and Max's ridiculous power – combined with their noticeably different movesets – mean that choosing a character makes a much bigger difference. Also key is the removal of the old special move system: while the police car scenes were entertaining they were also very long, so Streets of Rage 2 ditches them in favour of more streamlined special attacks. ■

FACT

A fourth Streets of Rage game was finally released in 2020, 26 years after the third game. It let you unlock every version of the SOR 1, 2 and 3 characters as hidden fighters.

STREETS OF RAGE 3

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

THE STREETS OF Rage trilogy ended with a game that was perhaps a little too over-ambitious and lost some of its appeal as a result. Max was ditched and replacing him was Zan, a robotic chap who can pick up weapons and convert them into balls of energy. A convoluted plot about bombs being placed on the streets and a police chief being replaced with a robot was badly localised, and many believed that Yuzo Koshiro's attempt at a new musical style fell far short of the exceptional soundtracks the first two games offered. What's more, the western version was heavily modified, some characters were redesigned or outright removed (including one stereotypical gay opponent) and the difficulty was greatly increased. Still a decent game in its own right but not the best in the trilogy. ■

FACT

At one point you fight a kangaroo boss called Roo. If you hold Up and B on the title screen as you press Start, Roo can be selected as a playable character.

STRIDER

Year 1990
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

SEGA'S PORT OF Capcom's 1989 arcade game was considered one of the early must-have games for the Mega Drive, thanks to its impressive level of authenticity. It's set in the year 2048, where the world is being ruled by an otherworldly being called Grandmaster Meio, who controls all the military. A group of stealth assassins called the Striders are called to help, and one in particular – Strider Hiryu – is tasked with saving the day. Armed with his impressively huge sword, Hiryu has to travel through the likes of St Petersburg (or Kazafu as it's known here), Siberia and the Amazon taking on crazy bosses such as giant robot gorillas, acrobat triplets and even a huge sickle-wielding snake made up of Russian soldiers. ■

FACT

Hiryu has appeared in a bunch of other Capcom games, most notably as a playable fighter in most of the Marvel vs Capcom series.

STRIDER RETURNS: JOURNEY FROM DARKNESS

Year 1992
Publisher US Gold
Developer Tiertex

SIMPLY KNOWN AS Strider II in Europe, US Gold's attempt at a sequel to Strider first launched on home computers in Europe before it was ported over to the Mega Drive. Playing as 'Strider Hinjo' (at least according to the horrendously written manual), you have to make your way through five stages to find and defeat the 'Evil Master dude and his legend of nimrods' and rescue Lexia: 'Not the car, the babe.' Seriously, the manual is abysmal. Although Strider II controls similarly to the first game and its influence is clear throughout, the choppier animation and generally poorer gameplay mean it's an inferior product. Capcom released its own Strider 2 in arcades in 1999, and has never acknowledged the US Gold one. ■

FACT

According to the game's sole programmer Allan Findlay, he could have done a better job with the Mega Drive port but was told the game had to be written and released as quickly as possible.

STRIKER

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Rage Software

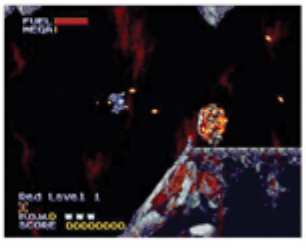
DESPITE THE NAME, this is actually the fourth game in the Striker series, and the second on the Mega Drive (the first was Ultimate Soccer). While it may not match the likes of FIFA, International Superstar Soccer or Sensible Soccer in terms of general enjoyment, its options and feature set are among the most impressive on the console. As well as 102 national teams, there are a further 220 club teams: 20 each from England, Scotland, Italy, Japan, Spain, France, Germany, Netherlands, Portugal, Wales and Belgium. Friendly, league and tournament options are a given, but you can also choose between normal 11-a-side football or indoor 6-a-side games, and while the standard Striker viewpoint is vertically scrolling, you can choose to make it horizontal if you prefer. ■

FACT

The team names are fake but Rage at least had a bit of fun with them. Expect to be choosing between the likes of Aston Thrilla, Thimbledon, Liverpond and Fatherwell.

SUB-TERRANIA

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Zyrinx



THE FIRST OF two visually impressive Mega Drive games by Amiga demo animation creators turned developers Zyrinx (see Red Zone earlier in this book), Sub-Terrania is a gravity-based shoot 'em up in which you are the pilot of an experimental attack fighter and have to rescue a bunch of colonists from an asteroid that's under attack from alien forces. The game is the shooter equivalent of patting your head and rubbing your tummy at the same time: while constantly fighting gravity and using your forward and reverse thrusters to control your ship, you're also trying to spin it and aim at enemies at the same time. This makes the game very hard to get to grips with, and as such the game has a reputation for being extremely difficult right from the off. ■

FACT

In an interview with website Sega-16, former Sega of America producer Tony Van said Sub-Terrania was one of SOA's worst selling games ever, and that it was actually even harder before release.

SUMMER CHALLENGE

Year 1993
Publisher Accolade
Developer MindSpan

WHAT DO YOU do when you want to make a Summer Olympics game, but you don't have the official IOC Olympic license and it's not even an Olympic year? If you're Accolade, you laugh heartily in the face of such obstacles and you just make your own game anyway. Summer Challenge is an Olympics game, licensing be damned, with eight different events to choose from: Archery, Equestrian, Kayaking, 400 Metre Hurdles, Pole Vaulting, High Jump, Javelin and Cycling. You can either practice an individual event or take part in a tournament that encompasses all eight. Rather uniquely for an athletics game, all eight events are played using a third-person viewpoint over the athlete's shoulder, presumably to provide a greater sense of immersion. ■

FACT

Summer Challenge's curious collection of events makes it one of the few Summer Olympic themed games to not include the 100 Metre Dash.

SUNSET RIDERS

Year 1992
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

DESPITE THE PREVALENCE of cowboy movies in the twentieth century there were surprisingly few video games set in the Old West, which is one of the reasons Sunset Riders is so fondly remembered by so many. This Mega Drive port of Konami's arcade gem is pretty heavily cut down in terms of content, but that doesn't prevent it from nevertheless being one of the most entertaining games on the Mega Drive, especially in two-player co-op mode. Players choose between one of two gunslingers (as opposed to four in the arcade) and blast their way through Reechforem Gulch (in search of Simon Greedwell), the Chatahoochie Choo-Choo (to catch Paco Loco), TP City (looking for Chief Scalpem) and finally the Powder Keg Mines to find British bad egg Sir Richard Rose. ■

FACT

The arcade version has a further four bosses, so anyone hoping to take down Hawkeye Hank Hatfield, Dark Horse, the Smith Brothers or El Greco here will be disappointed.

SUPER BASEBALL 2020

Year 1993
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer NuFX

SUPER BASEBALL 2020 was developed by SNK for its Neo Geo home and arcade machine, before EA picked it up and ported it to the Genesis. At its core it's an accomplished and fast-paced baseball game whose arcade roots make it one of the most accessible interpretations of the sport on the console, but there's a lot more to it than that. Set in the distant year 2020, its 12 teams don't just include men and women (each with their own enhanced body armour), but even robots too. Ballparks have been modified to include jump pads (giving players a chance to catch even the most devastating home run hits), and occasionally 'crackers' – a future baseball term for landmines(!) – are placed on the field. ■

FACT

Don't get too good at the game: the score counter only has two digits so if you score 100 runs your score will read 00. If you beat someone 100-1, you'll actually lose 0-1.

SUPER BATTLESHIP

Year 1993
Publisher Mindscape
Developer Synergistic

OF ALL THE board games that could be converted into video games, Battleship is probably one of the least suitable contenders. After all, it's a game of pure guesswork, and there isn't really much fun you can have there, especially if – as is the case here, bewilderingly – the video game version only supports one player, meaning you have to take on the CPU. That's why Mindscape decided to improve the game by offering two separate modes: the traditional Battleship board game fans know and love, and a new Super Battleship mode which is more of a turn-based strategy game where you get to take on 16 missions and can even control the cannons when you're firing at enemies. An interesting take on a limited game. ■

FACT

There have been a number of licensed special editions of Battleship over the years, including Pirates of the Caribbean, Star Wars and GI Joe.

SUPER BATTLETANK: WAR IN THE GULF

Year 1992
Publisher Absolute Entertainment
Developer Imagineering

IF YOU'VE EVER wondered what it was like operating a tank during the Gulf War, Super Battletank attempts to paint some sort of picture for you. Players are placed inside an M1A1 Abrams battle tank and armed with all the mod cons: 7.62mm machine guns, 120mm armour-piercing shells, smoke grenades, night vision, the full works. The game is specifically based during the '100-hour war' of Operation Desert Storm and, over the course of 10 missions, tasks you with taking down a series of Soviet Mil Mi-24 HIND choppers, T-72 tanks and SCUD launchers. Throughout each mission you can locate and visit Allied bases, where you can repair the damage you've taken, refuel your tank and replenish your ammo supply before heading out into the battlefield again. ■

FACT

A total of 1,848 M1A1 tanks were deployed to Saudi Arabia to take part in the liberation of Kuwait during the Gulf War, so if you die more times than that in the game you officially did worse than the real army.

SUPER FANTASY ZONE

Year 1992
Publisher Sunsoft
Developer Sunsoft

WHILE FANTASY ZONE is a Sega series, this Mega Drive follow-up was handled by Sunsoft with Sega's permission. It once again stars the adorable two-legged spaceship Opa-Opa as he vows to avenge his father O-Papa's death by putting an end to the evil Dark Menon's reign of terror. There are eight colourful stages in Super Fantasy Zone and, as in its predecessors, the aim is to fly left and right, shooting down enemies while trying to destroy the ten enemy bases on each stage. Once you've destroyed them all a huge, screen-filling boss will appear and you'll need to defeat it before you can move on to the next level. A shop occasionally appears, allowing you to upgrade Opa-Opa's wings and weaponry with the money you earn from fallen enemies. ■

FACT

Opa-Opa was Sega's first ever mascot. He was later replaced by Alex Kidd, who in turn was replaced by that blue hedgehog guy I've forgotten the name of.

SUPER HANG-ON

Year 1989
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

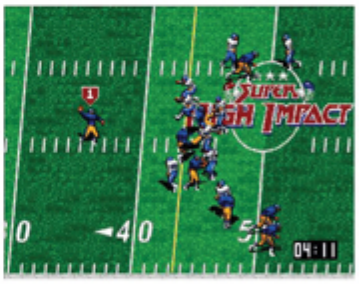
BEFORE THERE WAS OutRun there was Hang-On, the legendary Yu Suzuki's arcade motorbike racing game. Super Hang-On, released in arcades a couple of years later, built on its predecessor in numerous ways, making it a more well-rounded game in general. There are four distinct races to choose from, each based on a different continent and varying in difficulty. When you hit your top speed, you can hold the C button to trigger a turbo boost, which lasts until you either let go, hit the brakes or crash. This Mega Drive port also includes an exclusive Original mode, where your bike starts off extremely weak and you have to use prize money to upgrade your parts and hire a mechanic who can fix damage for you. ■

FACT

Sega's Yakuza 0, Yakuza 6 and Fist of the North Star: Lost Paradise all include sections where you can discover and play the original Super Hang-On arcade machine.

SUPER HIGH IMPACT

Year 1992
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Beam Software



MIDWAY MAY HAVE struck gold with NBA Jam in 1993 but that wasn't its first attempt at making an over-the-top arcade sports game with digitised graphics: that would be High Impact Football, followed by its sequel Super High Impact. It's the latter which got this Genesis port, where players can choose from 18 unlicensed teams covering most of the major cities plus, oddly, Africa and 'Europa'. Particularly hard tackles bring up a 'hit-o-meter' which rates the impact from 'Dweeb' to 'Awesome', while fights can break out from time to time, resulting in a button-mashing mini-game. It's safe to say this isn't a game that takes itself too seriously and while it's found itself on some 'worst Genesis games' lists over the years, that's perhaps a tad unfair. ■

FACT

According to the promotional flyer sent to arcades, the cabinet for the coin-op version of Super High Impact was supposed to give out trading cards to anyone who played.

SUPER HYDLIDE

Year 1989
Publisher Seismic
Developer T&E Soft

THIS IS ACTUALLY the third game in the Hydlide series: indeed, the Japanese version is simply called Hydlide III. It takes place a long time after the events of second game, where the now peaceful Fairyland is suddenly rocked by a huge column of fire that appears in the woods, causing monsters to appear and terrorise everyone. You play as a young lad who's been chosen by a wise oracle to be the one destined to save the day, so no pressure or anything. Super Hydlide plays like a standard top-down RPG but it does have a few interesting features, most notably its realistic emphasis on weight (you can only carry so much before your character moves very slowly) and your character's need to eat and sleep regularly to avoid losing health. ■

FACT

If you plan on playing Super Hydlide, be sure to actually buy a weapon at the shop before you leave the village. The game doesn't tell you to do this, meaning you can head out unarmed and be killed within seconds.

SUPER KICK OFF

Year 1992
Publisher US Gold
Developer Anco / Tiertex

SOMEWHAT STRANGELY, DESPITE the typical naming conventions of SNES games where many titles started with 'Super', it's the Mega Drive that gets the special treatment this time around: whereas it's simply known as Kick Off on Nintendo's console, it's Super Kick Off here. There are a series of game modes here, each with their own sets of squads: you can take part in an eight-team English league or cup, a sort of European super league (with 16 teams) or an international cup (also with 16 teams to choose from). None of the team or player names are correct, but the extensive editor mode lets you change them all manually (so long, 'Manchester') and a battery back-up lets you save your progress after doing so. ■

FACT

You can forgive game box blurb for dishing out a little hyperbole, but Super Kick Off's box refers to it as 'the greatest console game ever', which is maybe a tad too far.

SUPER MONACO GP

Year 1990
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

AS ONE OF the most visually impressive Sega arcade games at the time, Super Monaco GP was always going to be difficult to port to the Mega Drive. The result was surprisingly positive, however, as the home version's comparative lack of detail was more than made up for with its new World Championship mode. Whereas the arcade game only featured one track, the Mega Drive version contains all 16 tracks from the 1989 Formula One championship season, and contains sixteen teams and drivers to compete against (albeit with fake names). The result was one of the most well-loved early racing games for the Mega Drive, and one that – as seen elsewhere in this book – became a common addition to multi-game compilations due to its quality. ■

FACT

American tobacco company Philip Morris sued Sega for including 'Malbobo' billboards in the arcade version, spoofing its Marlboro brand. Sega settled the case and offered to replace arcade owners' boards with Malbobo-free ones.

SUPER OFF ROAD

Year 1992
Publisher Ballistic
Developer Software Creations

PREVIOUSLY ENDORSED ON other systems by Ivan 'Ironman' Stewart, Super Off Road is a fantastic racing game viewed from above, similar to games like Atari's Super Sprint. The aim is simple: take part in a series of dirt track races, and ensure you finish anywhere other than dead last. Your position determines how much prize money you get: this can then be spent on upgrades for your car or nitro boosts that give you a huge edge over your opponents. There are 16 tracks in total with such typically off-road names as Hurricane Gulch, Boulder Hill and Pig Bog. They're mean ones, too: each circuit has a bunch of hills, drops and other obstacles that require you to make the most of your cars' floaty suspension. ■

FACT

Super Off Road was ported to nearly 15 systems in total, including the likes of the NES, Game Boy, Atari Lynx and ZX Spectrum.

SUPER SKIDMARKS

Year 1995
Publisher Codemasters
Developer Acid Software

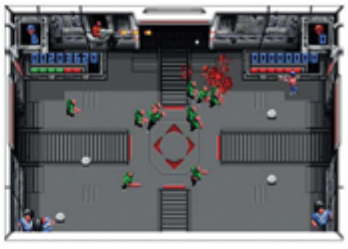
THIS EUROPEAN AND Australian release is one of the better region-exclusive games on the Mega Drive (and is coincidentally similar to the game right next to it in this book). Players can choose between six different vehicles – a bug, 4x4, sports car, compact, grand prix car or… um, a cow on wheels – and compete on 24 tracks, each with their own elaborate circuit designs and each riddled with numerous obstacles, dirt jumps and the like. Much like the Micro Machines and Pete Sampras games, Codemasters released Super Skidmarks as a J-Cart, a special cartridge with two extra controller ports, allowing players to connect up to four controllers without any extra multitap hardware and take part in split-screen races to see who's the best. ■

FACT

Although there are a decent number of Mega Drive games that start with the word 'Super', there are only six SNES games that start with 'Mega' (and most of those are Mega Man games).

SUPER SMASH TV

Year 1992
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Probe Software



IN THIS DYSTOPIAN game show from the future, players will actually risk their lives killing enemies in order to win toasters, roadsters and VCRs. Super Smash TV is a satirical but entertaining twin stick shooter and one of the most notoriously difficult examples of the genre. This difficulty is exacerbated on the Mega Drive due to its lack of twin stick controls: whereas the SNES version was able to emulate this with its four face buttons, the Mega Drive version instead does its best by assigning the A, B and C buttons to forward shots, reverse shots and locked shots respectively. Alternatively, by plugging in a second controller and holding one in each hand, players can use one D-Pad for moving and one for aiming. ■

FACT

Smash TV (as it was simply known in the arcades) was designed by Eugene Jarvis, who had already achieved great success in the twin-stick genre with the seminal Robotron: 2084.

SUPER STREET FIGHTER II

Year 1994
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom

AFTER MAKING GRADUAL enhancements to Street Fighter II with its Champion and Turbo editions, Capcom decided to go all out with Super Street Fighter II, adding four brand new characters. These new challengers – amnesiac British soldier Cammy, Jamaican kickboxer Dee Jay, indigenous Mexican warrior T-Hawk and 'definitely not Bruce Lee, honest mate' Fei Long – each bring something new to the table, and the new combo tracking system helps players determine whether they're stringing attacks together properly. The Mega Drive version does a reasonable job of replicating the massive arcade game, ramming it onto an enormous 40 megabit cartridge, which was widely heralded at the time. Despite this, the audio compression makes it clear that a lot of corners had to be cut to fit the game on Sega's console. ■

FACT

The game's 40 megabit (5 MB) cart makes it the biggest game released during the Mega Drive's natural life. By contrast, Street Fighter V on PS4 is 6,800 times bigger.

SUPER THUNDER BLADE

Year 1989
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

ONE OF ONLY two launch titles for the Mega Drive in Japan (along with Space Harrier II), Super Thunder Blade is an enhanced version of the arcade hit Thunder Blade. Players take control of an attack helicopter as they try to take down a group of renegade troops based in 'the East'. The game's four stages – set in a city, some woodlands, an ocean and another city at night – are split into two sections. The first gives an over the shoulder view similar to games like Space Harrier and After Burner, where you have to fly around gunning down enemies while avoiding their shots. After defeating the sub-boss the stage then switches to an overhead view, more similar to a vertical scrolling shoot 'em up. ■

FACT

It's been claimed that Thunder Blade was inspired by the 1983 movie *Blue Thunder*. It's kind of hard to argue otherwise when you realise the title screen is a heavily digitised still taken from that movie.

SUPER VOLLEYBALL

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Video System

VOLLEYBALL GAMES ARE generally few and far between on home consoles, so Super Volleyball was undoubtedly welcomed by fans of the sport. Oddly, the game doesn't make use of the full court: it's viewed from a side-on perspective and only uses a single plane, with players only able to move forwards and back. There are eight national teams to choose from – USA, USSR, Brazil, Holland, France, Italy, Japan and China – and you can either play a single match or take on the World League in which you face all the other teams. Player names are fake but it's possible to create an original team, with your own custom uniforms and player names, and replace one of the eight countries with it. ■

FACT

If you hold Up & B then press A to start your serve, then hold Down & B then press A when the ball turns red to hit it, you'll do a weird lightning serve where the ball moves in a wild zig-zag pattern.

SUPERMAN

Year 1992
Publisher Sunsoft / Virgin Games
Developer Thinking Rabbit

THIS MEGA DRIVE exclusive puts players in the shiny red boots of the Man of Steel as they take on three separate missions, each with a different super villain awaiting a beatdown at the end. In the first, children are disappearing all over Metropolis and it's all thanks to the Prankster. In the second, Metallo plans to hijack a train, drive it under the Metropolis bank and tunnel upwards into the vault. Finally, Lois Lane has been kidnapped by Brainiac and taken into outer space. That's a lot of stuff to be getting on with, but that's why they call him Superman and not Adequateman. Stages can consist of side-scrolling action platformer stages, or shoot 'em up sections where a flying Superman uses his heat vision to defeat enemies. ■

FACT

You'd think the Man of Steel would be a tough nut to crack, but Superman only has a single life in this game, so you'd better get good at it.

SWORD OF SODAN

Year 1990
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Innerprise

THIS CURIOUS SIDE-SCROLLING action game tells the story of Zoras, an evil wizard who's plotting to overthrow the world. The only pair who can stop him are the king's twin children – one male, one female – who have been given the sword of the fallen hero Sodan and have to (very slowly) travel the land defeating Zoras's enemies. The game is notable for its extremely large sprites and its limited controls: players only have a couple of attacks and combat is clunky. The main gimmick, however, is the potions that are dropped by enemies. These give typical strength and stamina boosts but can be combined in the pause menu for interesting effects: extra lives, level skips, flaming swords or even poison that damages you. You don't want that last one. ■

FACT

Sword of Sodan originally launched on the Amiga, where the female protagonist had significantly more revealing clothing. As with many Mega Drive ports, she was covered up for console.

SWORD OF VERMILLION

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

WHEN THE EVIL King Tsarkon of Cartahena invaded Excalabria and generally wrecked the joint, King Erik of Excalabria ordered his knight Blade to take his infant son away from danger and raise him as his own. Eighteen years later, a dying Blade spills the beans to said son, who decides it's his destiny to avenge his father's death. Both of them. Sword of Vermillion is an interesting starting point for those who want to get into RPGs but don't fancy turn-based battling: while the general exploration combines the top-down town view and first-person dungeon view common in games of its era, combat is instead performed in real time, meaning skilful hack 'n' slash players can still excel against stronger enemies. ■

FACT

The game was developed by Sega's R&D 8 division, led by Yu Suzuki. Shortly after its release, R&D 8 beame the legendary AM2, responsible for spearheading Sega's polygonal arcade games.

SYD OF VALIS

Year 1992
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Telenet

VALIS II WAS a very serious action-platformer released on the TurboGrafx-CD and various Japanese home computers. Syd of Valis is a significantly less serious remake, replacing all its characters with 'super deformed' versions (or 'chibi', as we tend to say these days). You play as Yuko, a high school student who's secretly the Valis Warrior. When her dead friend Reiko tells her telepathically that the Dream World is in danger, Yuko heads out to save the day. Syd of Valis has heavy Sailor Moon vibes – right down to the manga explaining the plot in the manual – and is an entertaining action game with plenty of personality. Along the way Yuko can also collect various outfits, which change her defence, attack and speed stats. ■

FACT

The game's strange title may be a localisation issue. The Japanese version's title screen says Valis SD (Super Deformed), whereas the western title screen says Valis SYD.

SYLVESTER AND TWEETY IN CAGEY CAPERS

Year 1994
Publisher TecMagik
Developer Alexandria

WHEN YOU GET a video game based on Sylvester the Cat and Tweety, you may struggle to think of a plot more complex than 'Sylvester needs to catch Tweety'. Sure enough, that's exactly what Cagey Capers is all about: playing as Sylvester, you have to chase Tweety through seven stages – Granny's house, her back garden, a train, an alleyway, Dr Jekyll's lab, an oversized version of the lab (after you take a shrinking potion) and a boat. Although you can scratch Tweety throughout a stage to gain extra points, you can only catch him at the end of each stage when he stands still. And in case you're wondering: no, he doesn't get Tweety at the end, making the whole game pointless. ■

FACT

The game has an interesting difficulty system, where you select a difficulty out of 100 per cent and that determines how many levels you play. You have to choose 81 per cent or higher to play the full game.

SYNDICATE

Year 1994
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Bullfrog Productions

IT'S NOT OFTEN a game gives you the chance to play as the bad guys, but it's hard to see the moral side of your quest in Syndicate, an isometric real-time strategy game with a moody cyberpunk vibe. It's set in the year 2096, where the world is split into regions controlled by a handful of massive corporations. As the leader of a crime syndicate, you've acquired the CHIP, a powerful mind control device that can be inserted into someone's neck and makes them forget all the horrors of the world. With a squad of CHIP-controlled agents at your disposal, the aim is to take on 50 missions all over the world in order to take over every region and turn your syndicate into the reigning empire. ■

FACT

A reimagining of Syndicate was released in 2012 for Xbox 360, PS3 and PC. It was a first-person shooter and, while generally praised, failed to make the same impact as the original.

T2: THE ARCADE GAME

Year 1992
Publisher Arena Entertainment
Developer Probe Software

THERE WERE TWO Terminator 2 games on the Mega Drive: one based on the arcade light gun game, the other an original adventure. Guess which one this is? T2: The Arcade Game has you making your way through seven stages, four in the future (a wasteland, a resistance hideout, a ride in a jeep and Skynet's HQ) and three in the present day (Cyberdyne's HQ, a highway chase in a SWAT van and the steel mill from the end of the movie). Naturally, the goal is to take out as many Terminators as you can along the way, as well as the T-1000 later in the game. While it can be played with a controller, it's vastly preferable to use the Sega Menacer light gun (when it works). ■

FACT

The promotional flyer for the actual arcade version shows a brilliant photo of the T-800 playing the game. Which must have been difficult to organise given their general dislike of humans.

TALESPIN

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

NOT TO BE confused with the completely different Capcom game made for the NES, TaleSpin is nevertheless also based on the Disney Saturday morning TV cartoon. Playing as either Baloo or Kit, the game revolves around a special competition where the aim is to collect cargo in nine different locations all over the world. If the pair win they'll get a lucrative contract that will keep their air cargo freight company in business for a while. The problem is, Shere Khan is also trying to win the contest, and if you want to beat him you're going to have to collect all nine pieces of cargo within seven days. The game is split into two different styles: platforming sections where you have to find the cargo, and flying sections. ■

FACT

In case you aren't familiar with it, *TaleSpin* took characters from *The Jungle Book* – Baloo, King Louie and Shere Khan – and anthropomorphised them, giving them jobs in a city.

TARGET EARTH

Year	1990
Publisher	DreamWorks
Developer	NCS

BETTER KNOWN BY its Japanese title Assault Suit Leynos and for being the first in NCS's Assault Suit Series, Target Earth is a run and gun game where your character is wearing an extremely powerful 12-foot-tall robotic battle suit. When a new alien enemy called the Chron starts attacking Earth, assault suit soldier Rex – who's situated in an allied base on Ganymede – gets in his suit and blasts off to defeat the Chron forces. The assault suit is armed with a selection of weapons, which can be chosen before each mission and switched at will with the C button. There are eight stages in total, many of which have a specific mission: destroying an enemy warship before it reaches your base, protecting colonists as they try to evacuate, and so on. ■

FACT

The only other Assault Suit games released in the west were Assault Suits Valken (aka Cybernator) on the SNES, and its PS2 remake (which got a European release).

TASK FORCE HARRIER EX

Year	1991
Publisher	Treco
Developer	NMK / Jordan

AS THE NAME suggests, Task Force Harrier EX is an enhanced port of the arcade game Task Force Harrier. You play as Falcon, a UN pilot who's been assigned to help destroy Russian terrorists who are threatening to destroy the US with TU-190 bombers. In your shiny new Harrier V, you have to fly to Russia and take out the communist military force… which is slightly on the nose for a game made in 1991. For the most part it's a standard vertical shoot 'em up where you're armed with normal shots for air-based opponents and bombs for ground-based ones. You can, however, get support from peace forces, who'll fly alongside you in formation. You can change the formation with the press of a button, affecting your shot pattern. ■

FACT

The Japanese version's credits say: 'See you again in Altein, bye bye.' Altein was supposed to be Treco's next game, but it was scrapped.

TAZ-MANIA

Year	1992
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Recreational Brainware

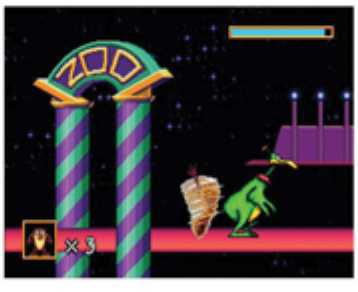
THE TASMANIAN DEVIL was a fairly minor character in the Looney Tunes stable until the animated series *Taz-Mania* started in 1991. In this video game adaptation, Taz is hungry and is looking to make an omelette but there's only one egg big enough to satisfy his hunger: that of the legendary giant Tasmanian seabird. The aim of the game, then, is to travel across Tasmania in search of the egg. Taz has a spin attack which lets him bump into enemies at high speed, but he can also pick up and eat some creatures, as well as various other items to recover health. The game is most notorious, however, for its mine cart stage, which is considered one of the most frustrating levels in any Mega Drive platformer. ■

FACT

In the cartoon, Taz was voiced by Jim Cummings. He's best known for being the voice of Winnie the Pooh since 1988: talk about a diverse range.

TAZ IN ESCAPE FROM MARS

Year	1994
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Headgames / Nu Romantic Productions



MARVIN THE MARTIAN was unhappy that his Martian zoo was missing an exhibit, so he decided to go to Earth to find a rare creature. As you'd expect from the title, he decided to capture Taz, took him to Mars and locked him up. Escape from Mars opens with Taz breaking out of his cage and realising he has to get back to Earth somehow. His journey takes in six different locations: Mars, two other strange planets called Moleworld and Planet X, Mexico, a haunted castle and finally Marvin's house where Taz wants to settle this once and for all. The game plays similarly to Taz-Mania, and Taz has more or less the same moves as he did in that game (although he moves a lot quicker). ■

FACT

Taz-Mania lasted for four seasons and 65 episodes, running from 1991 to 1995 before Warner Bros cancelled it.

TEAM USA BASKETBALL

Year	1992
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Developer	Electronic Arts

ALTHOUGH IT'S TECHNICALLY the third game in EA's NBA Playoffs series of games, Team USA Basketball is instead focused on the American team that competed in the 1992 Barcelona Summer Olympics. As such there are no NBA teams in the game, only 14 international ones. Sadly, these aren't the same teams that actually qualified for the 1992 Olympics: teams like Canada, France and Yugoslavia are in the game but weren't in the tournament, while in real life the likes of Puerto Rico, Brazil and Germany reached the quarter finals but aren't in the game. The game itself plays similarly to EA's other NBA Playoffs games, though the courts have been redesigned to meet international FIBA standards (such as the shape of the key and the three-point line). ■

FACT

FIBA regulation basketball courts had a trapezoid-shaped key from 1956 to 2010, at which point it was changed to a rectangular one more similar to that used in the NBA.

TECHNOCLASH

Year	1993
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Developer	Zono / BlueSky Software

THE INNER REALM is a peaceful place where wizards live in happiness. One day that's all flipped onto its backside when an 'Engine Man' – a half-man, half-machine cyborg chap – enters the Inner Realm via a portal and steals the Life Staff. Playing as the wizard prince Ronaan, you have to chase him through the portal to the Outer Realm (aka Earth), where technology is rife and these robot sods are all over the place. Technoclash is an overhead action RPG in which Ronaan is armed with a bunch of different spells. When I say armed, I mean it: he has nine combat spells at his disposal, and four non-combat ones (including the ability to heal himself, make himself levitate and the like). ■

FACT

Technoclash's story and character designer was Ed Zobrist, who had previously designed some *Real Ghostbusters* toys and written some *He-Man* episodes.

TECHNOCOP

Year	1991
Publisher	RazorSoft
Developer	Gray Matter / Imagexcel

IN THE NUCLEAR wastelands of the twenty-first century, the country has been taken over by a gang known as the D.O.A. You are Technocop, one of the few surviving members of a group called the Enforcers. Your orders are to travel the highways, bringing D.O.A. thugs to justice. The game is split into two styles: the first is a racing section where you have to reach a certain goal within a time limit. If you manage this the game switches a side-on view where you patrol the area and gun down D.O.A. thugs. Technocop is notorious for being an extremely gory game because your gun is 'designed for internal explosion of human targets'. As such the packaging warns it's unsuitable for anyone under 12. ■

FACT

An NES version of Technocop was planned, but Tengen scrapped it during its legal battle with Nintendo over unlicensed cartridges. Its excellent soundtrack was recovered and can be found online.

TECMO SUPER BASEBALL

Year	1994
Publisher	Tecmo
Developer	Sculptured Software

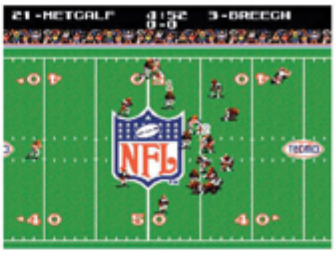
IN THE LATE '80s and early '90s Tecmo saw great success with its range of licensed sports games on the NES, and later the SNES and Genesis. Tecmo Super Baseball is just one of many examples of this (as you'll see on the coming pages), and while it didn't boast the official MLB licence it did have the MLBPA one, giving players access to a full roster of around 700 real players. This aside, it offers the same sort of stuff you'd expect from most other decent baseball games of that era: you can take part in exhibition games or a full season, or play an All-Star game with the best in the league (or draft your own All-Star teams if you'd rather). ■

FACT

The game lets you be a coach instead of a player, if you like. You can tell players when to steal, bunt, or intentionally walk a batter, for example.

TECMO SUPER BOWL

Year 1993
Publisher Tecmo
Developer Tecmo



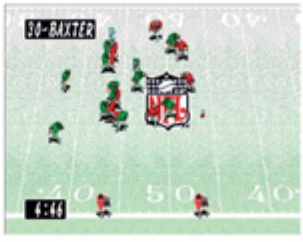
NOT TO BE confused with the NES version of Tecmo Super Bowl, which itself was an enhanced version of Tecmo Bowl, this is instead an enhanced version of that. If that makes sense. The NES game was considered the best American football game ever made at the time, but on a console where John Madden Football now existed, Tecmo Super Bowl had stiffer competition. Rather than competing with Madden in the realism stakes, then, Tecmo Super Bowl decides to follow its predecessor's lead and offers a more arcade-style, faster game. One thing it did have that Madden didn't – at least until Madden NFL 94 launched shortly afterwards – was full NFL licensing, containing all official teams, logos and players as well as the actual Super Bowl trophy. ■

FACT

While most American football games had a season mode at the time, Tecmo Super Bowl lets you play either the 90–91, 91–92 or 92–93 seasons, or even go for a three-year 90–93 campaign.

TECMO SUPER BOWL II: SPECIAL EDITION

Year 1995
Publisher Tecmo
Developer Tecmo



TECMO SUPER BOWL received two updates on the Genesis before Tecmo decided to draw a line under the series. The second game included a bunch of new features, the most notable of which was the ability to trade players between different teams. It also offered the option to continuously play new seasons, with the schedule updating based on the previous season's results. The number of offensive plays was doubled, fake punts and fake field goals were added, quarterbacks could call audibles and the playing field was made larger to give players more room to move. On top of this, rosters from the previous three seasons were also made available, so you could put the 1992 Dolphins against the 1993 Broncos should you so desire. ■

FACT

Tecmo Super Bowl remains such a much-loved series to this day that modders often take the old NES, SNES and Genesis games and hack them to replace the rosters with present-day ones.

TECMO SUPER BOWL III: FINAL EDITION

Year 1995
Publisher Tecmo
Developer Tecmo

THE FINAL GAME in the Tecmo Super Bowl added even more features to make it the definitive edition. Two point conversions were added, as was the ability to change defensive formations and offensive lineups. New stadium types were also made available, such as a rather nifty looking one based on a baseball field converted to an American football field. The NFL's two new expansion teams, the Jacksonville Jaguars and Carolina Panthers, were also added. Most notable of all, though, was a new Superstar mode, which let you create your own players for the first time and sign them as a free agent for your favorite team. A strong way to end what many still consider to be the most entertaining American football series ever. ■

FACT

The original Tecmo Bowl featured in a 2017 Kia Sorento ad, where Bo Jackson (the game's best player) runs out of the stadium, jumps in the car, and drives an 8-bit version back onto the field.

TECMO SUPER HOCKEY

Year 1994
Publisher Tecmo
Developer Malibu Games

WITH TECMO MAKING video games based on baseball, American football and basketball, it stands to reason that it wouldn't neglect America's other favourite sport. No, not NASCAR. Much like Tecmo Super Baseball, this ice hockey game features the official players' association licence but not the official league licence, so all your favourite NHL players are included, even if their teams are generic. You can choose to play a regular-length or shortened season, complete with playoffs, and there are eight different categories of stats you can follow throughout the season in a 'League Leaders' table. In-game, there are a few dynamic animations to keep things interesting, like close-ups of the sticks during a face-off. Despite all this, critics were generally lukewarm, declaring the game somewhat average. ■

FACT

Tecmo Super Hockey is one of the few 16-bit Tecmo sports games not to be released on the SNES, despite still having 'Super' in its title.

TECMO SUPER NBA BASKETBALL

Year 1993
Publisher Tecmo
Developer Sculptured Software

LIKE ITS TECMO Super Bowl series, Tecmo Super NBA Basketball has both the full league and players' association licences, meaning not only does it have a roster of more than 320 real players, they're also playing for actual NBA teams. All 27 teams are available here and players can choose to take part in either a full-length season or shorter ones. Seasons are saved on the cartridge's battery back-up, as are player and team stats for that season. Somewhat unusually for a basketball game of that era, it also allows you to call specific offensive plays to ensure your team lines itself up in a specific way: this level of detail was uncommon for a genre that was still fairly basic in the 16-bit era. ■

FACT

The Mega Drive version is missing Michael Jordan (who'd retired to play baseball) and Reggie Lewis (who had passed away). They're known as Guard Bulls and Forward Celtics in the game instead.

TECMO WORLD CUP

Year 1992
Publisher Atlus
Developer Hertz

TECMO SUPER BOWL may have been the most memorable of Tecmo's sporting efforts in North America, but overseas it was the company's attempt at football that garnered the most attention. Tecmo World Cup '90 was an arcade game that was much loved throughout Japan and Europe, and this Genesis port was an enhanced follow-up. Whereas the arcade game only had eight teams to choose from, there are 24 in total here. Despite being based on a 1990 game, the 24 teams here aren't based on those that qualified for World Cup Italia 90. Ten of those teams (such as Ireland, Sweden and Cameroon) didn't make the cut in this game, whereas teams like France, Japan and Mexico – who weren't at Italia '90 – are in. ■

FACT

The Japanese version distinguishes itself from the arcade original a little by going with the name Tecmo World Cup 1992. Which is fine and all, but there wasn't a World Cup in 1992.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: THE HYPERSTONE HEIST

Year 1992
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

FOR MOST TEENAGE Mutant Ninja Turtles fans, the two arcade games released in 1989 and 1991 remain the best TMNT games to this day. The Hyperstone Heist was based on the second of these, Turtles in Time, though it tells its own unique story instead. The evil Shredder has acquired a powerful Dimension X treasure called the Hyperstone, and uses it to shrink the entire area of Manhattan. The Turtles have to fight through five different areas – New York City, a ghost ship, Shredder's hideout, a boss rush section and the Technodrome – battling with the Foot Clan and other enemies along the way. The game uses the same combat system as Turtles in Time, meaning it could be considered a sequel of sorts. ■

FACT

The European and North American covers have a completely different tone. The EU one is based on the colourful '80s cartoon series, whereas the NA one looks more like the comic books.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: TOURNAMENT FIGHTERS

Year 1993
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

THE NES, SNES and Mega Drive each got a completely different TMNT: Tournament Fighters game, each with totally different plots, rosters and fighting systems. The Mega Drive version has Master Splinter being kidnapped by Krang and taken to Dimension X. Krang has also created clones of the four Turtles, April O'Neil, Casey Jones and two of their friends: comic book character Ray Fillet and an entirely original character called Sisyphus. The player chooses one of these characters and has to fight through the eight clones, before finally facing off against three bosses: a Triceraton, Krang and Karai. Although the six-button controller existed by this point, the Mega Drive version only has two attack buttons, making combat slightly limited compared to most other Street Fighter imitators. ■

FACT

The back of the box has the rather clunky claim that 'NO STREET FIGHTER HAS EVER SEEN FIGHTERS OR FIGHTING LIKE THIS!'

TELSTAR DOUBLE VALUE GAMES

Year 1993–94
Publisher Telstar
Developer Various

UK PUBLISHER TELSTAR Electronic Studios was established in 1993 and initially started off by releasing two-for-one compilations of other publishers' legacy titles. This series was called Double Value Games and each release contained two full games – each with the original box, cartridge and manual – literally bundled together in a plastic sleeve. There were 20 of these in total for the Mega Drive, and while most of these made sense thematically – one included Batman and The Terminator, another bundled Alien 3 with Predator 2 – a couple of them felt a little random (WWF Super WrestleMania and Powermonger, anyone?). Because each bundle came as two self-contained games most customers chucked the plastic sleeves in the bin, meaning getting the full set of 20 will be quite the effort. ■

FACT

Of the 20 releases, the one that offered the best value contained Lotus II and EA Sports Double Header, because the latter consisted of EA Hockey and John Madden Football, giving players three games in total.

THE TERMINATOR

Year 1992
Publisher Virgin Games
Developer Probe Software

THIS BRIEF ACTION game tells the story of the hit movie *The Terminator*, or at least what it would have been like if it was a 20-minute TV episode. There are four stages in total: playing as Kyle Reese, you first have to escape the dystopian future of 2029 AD by blowing up a reactor with a bomb then hopping into a time machine. Now in 1984, you have to make your way through the streets of LA to reach Sarah Connor, then rescue her from a police station (while trying to avoid the Terminator patrolling the corridors), then finally defeat the Terminator's endoskeleton at a factory. It's a fun game, but once you learn the ins and outs it can be beaten in around 10 minutes. ■

FACT

Because the game was developed in the UK, the music was designed with 50Hz speed in mind. This wasn't corrected for the North American release, so the high-tempo soundtrack Americans got wasn't deliberate.

TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY

Year 1993
Publisher Flying Edge
Developer Bits Studios

AS WELL AS the port of the Terminator 2 arcade light gun game, Mega Drive owners also got a second T2 title that was unique to 16-bit consoles. Playing as Arnold Schwarzenegger's T-800 character, you have to play through eight stages set in key locations from the movie: the biker bar from the opening section, John Connor's home, the shopping mall, the Pescadero State Hospital, the compound, Miles Dyson's home, Cyberdyne HQ and the steel mill. While the majority of the action is played from a side-on perspective, there are also a bunch of isometric driving stages that bridge the gaps between most levels. ■

FACT

You'd better hope you like the rock music that plays in the first level, because there isn't actually any other music in the game: the one track plays for the entirety.

THEME PARK

Year 1995
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Bullfrog Productions

HAVE YOU EVER been to Disneyland and thought 'I could do a better job than this'? Firstly, you should focus more on enjoying yourself while you're there. Secondly, Theme Park lets you put your money where your mouth is. The aim, as the title suggests, is to build your own amusement park from scratch: purchasing rides and shops, employing staff and researching new attractions to keep the punters turning up. It's not as simple as plonking things down randomly: careful attention has to be paid to how long the queues are, employing enough janitors to clean up vomit and garbage, making sure rides are maintained and the like. There are plenty of tricks to learn too: for example, if you make your fries saltier, your customers will buy more drinks. ■

FACT

If you can't be bothered earning your success and just want to go wild, enter the name ZARKON and the password 8AAACAA9999 to start with $1,048,575,000.

THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE & FRIENDS

Year	1993
Publisher	THQ
Developer	Malibu Interactive

NOT TO BE confused with the Thomas the Tank Engine game on the SNES, this Genesis title says 'Adventure Series' on the box, and that's a fair description of what you get here. Players can choose between five different trains: Thomas, Percy, Toby, Duck and James. They can then choose their colour (except Thomas, who has to stay blue) and name their driver. They can then take part in one of three modes: Game asks the player to find the correct rolling stock (flat trucks, mine trucks, passenger carriages etc) and take them to the right station. Race mode lets Thomas compete in a series of races against other trains. Finally, Explore lets you drive around the game map without any limitations. ■

FACT

According to the Thomas the Tank Engine Wiki, the game wrongly shows James with a 4-4-0 wheel arrangement, when it's clearly supposed to be a 2-6-0 configuration. Look, I don't know what it means.

THUNDER FORCE II

Year	1989
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Tecnosoft

THE ORIGINAL THUNDER Force was released on Japanese home computers in the mid '80s and was generally well-received. This sequel marked the series' debut on the Mega Drive, and was one of the six launch games on the Genesis in North America. The Lone Star System, who were defeated in the first game, have returned 18 years later to once again wage war against the peaceful planet Nebula. Flying your space jet Thunder Force II(™), you have to destroy everything you can in five stages of action. Each stage is split into two viewpoints: you start, as in the first game, with a top-down viewpoint where you're able to fly wherever you like in eight directions. Once you survive that you move on to a side-scrolling shoot 'em up section. ■

FACT

The ship isn't really called Thunder Force II, that's just what the North American manual says. It's now canonically known as the Fire LEO-02 Exceliza, which to be fair is harder to remember.

THUNDER FORCE III

Year	1990
Publisher	Tecnosoft
Developer	Tecnosoft

THE THIRD THUNDER Force game debuted exclusively on the Genesis (before being ported to arcades later in the year). The plot has been tweaked to better suit the Japanese one: the Lone Star System is now no longer the name of the enemy and they're now the Empire of Lone. Turns out the war in Thunder Force II was never resolved, and 100 years later it's spread throughout half the galaxy. This time you're in a new starfighter – the Fire Leo 3, codenamed Styx – but the mission is a familiar one: get out there and blast everything to space dust. Thunder Force III ditched the top-down sections of the first two games, deciding to focus mainly on the more popular side-scrolling shoot 'em up sections. ■

FACT

Thunder Force III was ported to arcades as Thunder Force AC, marking the series' coin-op debut. This version is available on the Nintendo Switch as part of the Sega Ages series.

THUNDER FORCE IV

Year	1992
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Tecnosoft

IT SEEMS THAT whoever was in charge of localising the Thunder Force stories was as indecisive as a Magic 8-Ball, because once again the enemy's name was changed for the fourth game, this time to the Lohun Empire. This time the aim is to take out their command centre to make way for the rest of your military's force to infiltrate and bring them down for good. Once again Thunder Force IV sticks with side-scrolling shoot 'em up gameplay, but the biggest addition here is the 'Thunder Sword', an enormous attack you get about halfway through the game: once you meet the requirements needed to pull it off you'll be able to do huge damage. The game was roundly praised by critics, but its extreme slowdown didn't go unnoticed. ■

FACT

In the game's official canon, the antagonists are called the ORN Empire, and have always been called that in Japan since the first game.

THUNDER FOX

Year 1991
Publisher Taito
Developer Aisystem Tokyo

IF YOU'RE LOOKING for the most generic plot in the history of video games, you'd struggle to find a better competitor than Thunder Fox. Terrorists have done some sort of nondescript terrorising, so it's up to the dream team of Thunder and Fox – a couple of butch shirtless chaps who are so bulked up they're in danger of suffocating on their own neck muscles – to walk from left to right killing as many of them as they can. Players can choose between Thunder and Fox at the start of the game: the box says they're 'uniquely skilled' but unless putting on red trousers and blue trousers count as separate skills that claim is dubious. The original arcade version supported two-player co-op but that's sadly not the case here. ■

FACT

How do you end a game with such a generic plot? Simple, you show Thunder and Fox drinking coffee (seriously) as they reflect on how they 'crushed the spread of global terrorism'.

THE TICK

Year 1994
Publisher Fox Interactive
Developer Software Creations

THE TICK ANIMATED series started in 1994 and lasted for three seasons, with this game launching near the start of the run. It puts players in the ill-fitting blue costume of the comical 7-foot tall, 400lb arachnid and comprises three separate adventures split into 16 chapters. The first has the Tick rescuing 'ninja warrior-babe' Oedipus from a bunch of evil ninjas, the second has him trying to stop Chairface Chippindale writing his name on the moon and the third has him trying to end the evil alien dictator Thrakkorzog's plans for world domination. The gameplay is split into side-scrolling and beat 'em up sections, but despite this variety it was generally panned for its repetitive combat and its seemingly endless waves of identical enemies. ■

FACT

The Tick was voiced by Townsend Coleman, who was better known as the voice of Michaelangelo in the '80s and '90s *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* cartoons.

TIME KILLERS

Year 1996
Publisher Black Pearl Software
Developer Incredible Technologies

WHEN IT FIRST launched in arcades in 1992 – just a month after Mortal Kombat – Time Killers enjoyed notoriety for its extremely gory content and its focus on weapons-based combat. By the time it came to the Mega Drive a full four years later, though, both its blood and its blades were old news and had been seen plenty of times in other games. Players choose between eight characters, each from a different time period (a caveman, a Viking, a samurai, that sort of thing). Its main gimmick was its dismemberment system: if you hit an arm enough times you could cut it off, affecting your opponent's attacking options. You could also attempt a Death Move, which cut their head off and instantly ended the round. ■

FACT

THQ was supposed to launch the Mega Drive version in Spring 1994: it was even reviewed by *EGM* magazine (who gave it 4.2). It was then scrapped until Black Pearl picked it up in 1996, at which point critics fittingly tore it apart.

TINHEAD

Year 1993
Publisher Ballistic / Spectrum HoloByte
Developer MicroProse

NOT TO BE confused with the young lad from Brookside (a joke that will fall flat with both non-Brits and anyone born after the late '90s), Tinhead is a little metallic chap who was chilling out in his space station when he heard a distress call. Turns out the cry for help came from the actual stars in the galaxy, who have been sucked out of space by a criminally insane goblin called Grim Squidge. Tinhead must now explore four worlds in search of the crystal globes containing the stars. His main ability is shooting balls from his helmet (another reference non-Brits will thankfully miss), but the twist is that by pressing A you can toggle between shooting them forwards, diagonally up, or diagonally down (to make them bounce off the ground). ■

FACT

Tinhead is available in two versions: one published by Ballistic in 1993, and one by Spectrum HoloByte in 1994. Neither is particularly rarer than the other.

TINTIN IN TIBET

Year 1996
Publisher Infogrames
Developer Infogrames

SINCE HE'S EVERYONE'S favourite Belgian journalist (sorry Colette Braeckman), it should come as no surprise that Tintin has been the star of a few games over the years. The Mega Drive was treated to one of these: Tintin in Tibet is based on the comic serial of the same name, the 20th volume in the *Adventures of Tintin* series. As in the story, Tintin has to travel to Tibet and try to find his friend Tchang, who's mysteriously gone missing. The game takes in 14 different stages, from the train station to Kathmandu to a Yeti's cave, and everything's presented in a side-scrolling manner with some wonderfully drawn backgrounds and character animations. While praised for these, it also got some criticism for its high difficulty. ■

FACT

There were 23 Tintin volumes in total. The 24th, *Tintin and Alph-Art*, was left unfinished when cartoonist Hergé died, so his transcript and sketches were published in a book.

TINY TOON ADVENTURES: ACME ALL-STARS

Year 1994
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

WARNER BROS' SMASH cartoon Tiny Toon Adventures got a ton of video games dedicated to it, and almost all of them were exclusive to a single platform. The Mega Drive was graced with two, one of which was ACME All-Stars. Rather than your typical platformer, ACME All-Stars is instead a sports compilation, consisting of five separate games: Soccer, Baseball, Bowling, Obstacle Course and Montana Hitting (the latter is an elaborate Whack-a-Mole mini-game). There are 12 characters in the game – including the likes of Buster and Babs Bunny, Plucky Duck, Hamton J Pig, Shirley and Loon and Montana Max – and, depending on the sport chosen, players either choose a single character or put together a team from the full roster. ■

FACT

There were 17 *Tiny Toon Adventures* games over the course of a decade. The first was 1991's Tiny Toon Adventures on the NES, and the last was Buster's Bad Dream on the Game Boy Advance in 2001.

TINY TOON ADVENTURES: BUSTER'S HIDDEN TREASURE

Year 1993
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

BEFORE ACME ALL-STARS launched, Mega Drive-owning Tiny Toon Adventures fans did indeed get 'your typical platformer' (at the risk of quoting myself like a big egomaniac). Buster's Hidden Treasure has the player controlling Buster Bunny as he hunts for Montana Max, who's stolen a treasure map. Not content with simply swiping the map, Monty has also teamed up with Dr Gene Splicer to create mind-control devices for some of Buster's friends, and trained them to attack Buster. He's even kidnapped Babs Bunny on top of all that. That should keep you busy as you run, jump and slide attack through the game's 33 stages in a platform game with a momentum-based running system that bears a slight passing resemblance to the Sonic games at times. ■

FACT

In a rare sign of good and bad coming together, the game ends with Buster and Montana Max agreeing to use the treasure to build an amusement park.

TNN BASS TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS

Year 1994
Publisher American Softworks
Developer Imagitec Design

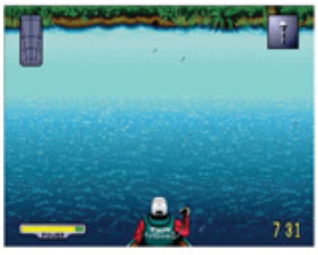
THE NASHVILLE NETWORK launched as a cable TV channel in 1983, and a decade later decided to debut a block of specialty programmes called TNN Outdoors. To promote this new subdivision, the network teamed up with American Softworks to release TNN Bass Tournament of Champions, a fishing game about catching bass, because presumably (based on other games on the Genesis) bass is the only type of fish you can catch in America. There are six lakes to choose from (simply named North, South, East, West, Salt and Fresh), and you can either choose to take part in a series of increasingly challenging tournaments, or just do a spot of free fishing where you can choose your own lake and weather with no restrictions. ■

FACT

The game (and its sequel) came with a big poster of a bass, promoting TNN Outdoors. Just in case you wanted to make sure the first thing you saw every morning was a big fish looking at you.

TNN OUTDOORS BASS TOURNAMENT '96

Year 1996
Publisher ASC Games
Developer Imagitec Design



PRESUMABLY TERRIFIED THAT Genesis owners hadn't managed to get all that bass fishing out of their system, American Softworks (now rebranded as ASC) decided to release a second TNN Outdoors game a couple of years later, this time with a '96 in the title in case they chose to make even more. The game is essentially an enhanced version of its predecessor, with a bunch of improvements made. The previous game's horrendous menu controls (where A and C toggled between options and B selected them) were replaced with something more conventional, and the generic lakes were replaced with real ones: Lake Okeechobee, Truman Reservoir, Lake Erie West, Dale Hollow, Lake Eufaula and Bull Shoals. A new overhead lure screen also makes it easier to see if fish are biting. ■

FACT

Oddly, later versions of the game came on Electronic Arts cartridges (with a yellow tab on the side). At the time, ASC was working with EA on a Saturn game called S.T.O.R.M. which was eventually cancelled.

TODD'S ADVENTURES IN SLIME WORLD

Year 1992
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Epyx

TODD AND HIS work colleague Rooney are a pair of space explorers who are sitting bored at their work cubicles one day when they're suddenly given a new mission: head to the newly discovered planet in the Gamma Mu Eta system and investigate the unknown semi-liquid material it contains. Todd and Rooney excitedly head out, blissfully unaware that the slime planet has already claimed a number of victims. There are six different 'adventures' to choose from in this action platformer, each with its own unique stages and its own theme: the Logic adventure, for example, prevents Todd from using his water gun and forces the player to figure out other ways to navigate the hazards. There's also the option to play with two players simultaneously in six more adventures (two competitive, four co-op). ■

FACT

The reason there's so much green on the screen is because the game originally launched on the Atari Lynx handheld in 1990, and that had a much smaller resolution than Sega's console.

TOEJAM & EARL

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Johnson-Voorsanger Productions

WHEN IT COMES to cult classics, fewer Mega Drive games fit that bill more perfectly than ToeJam & Earl, an eccentric adventure game with a brilliantly bizarre sense of humour. The titular two are a pair of space aliens from the planet Funkotron, and one day while flying their rocket ship through space, Earl asks to take over the controls. Unfortunately, Earl isn't the smartest Funkotronian, and he proceeds to steer the ship straight into an asteroid, causing the pair to crash-land on Earth. ToeJam & Earl must now wander the planet in search of the 10 missing parts of their rocket ship, so they can put it back together and return to the planet Funkotron. The only problem is they aren't familiar with Earth, and the Earthlings that inhabit it are extremely hostile to these new extraterrestrial gatecrashers. The game offers you the chance to play as either ToeJam (the skinny red one) or Earl (the fat yellow one) – or both in co-op mode – and lets you choose between 25 fixed levels or procedurally generated ones. The aim is to find the elevator in each stage, which will take you up to the next one, while also looking for the ship piece in the stages that contain them. Along the way you'll be chased by all manner of dangerous Earthlings, from insane dentists to frantic mothers with shopping trolleys, to Hula girls who distract you with their dancing. Even Santa and Cupid make an appearance from time to time. Although this book is more an encyclopedia than a buyer's guide, I must break protocol to personally recommend this one. ■

FACT

The game was developed primarily with co-op in mind. In a 1992 interview with *Sega Visions* magazine, designer Greg Johnson described it as 'a two-player game with a one-player option'.

TOEJAM & EARL: PANIC ON FUNKOTRON

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Johnson-Voorsanger Productions

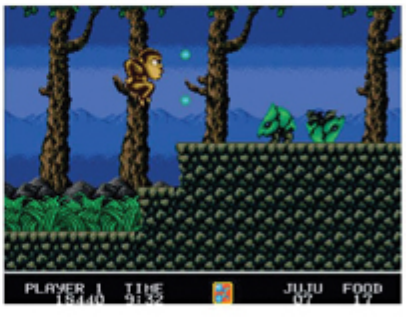
AFTER SUCCESSFULLY REBUILDING their rocket ship at the end of the first game and flying back to Funkotron, ToeJam and Earl arrive to discover that a bunch of Earthlings had managed to stow away on the ship and are now running loose on the pair's home planet. The Earthlings are causing chaos on Funkotron, to the extent that Lamont the Funkapotomus – the source of the planet's funk – has escaped to another dimension to avoid the hullabaloo. ToeJam and Earl have to clear Funkotron of the Earthling invasion, and do it quickly, otherwise Lamont's absence will cause the planet to be completely stripped of all its funk. Rather than a top-down, free-roaming, procedurally generated adventure like the first game, Panic on Funkotron is a side-scrolling 2D platformer where ToeJam and Earl have to capture Earthlings by throwing jars at them to trap them inside. New Earthling types include construction workers, rich ladies with poodles, a naked man in a box and the slightly annoying tourists, who take photos of you and can temporarily stun you with their camera flash. At least this time the tubular two aren't alone: because they're on their home planet there are plenty of fellow Funkotronians they can interact with. While most of these interactions are basic conversations, if you meet your friends Peabo, Sharla or Lewanda you can start a 'Jam Out' mini-game, where they perform a certain beat and you have to press buttons to match it. ■

FACT

The ToeJam & Earl series continued with a third game on the original Xbox in 2002. It then lay dormant until 2019, when a reboot called ToeJam & Earl: Back in the Groove launched on modern systems.

TOKI: GOING APE SPIT

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer TAD Corporation



IN THE YEAR 2050, mankind has become so disgusted with technology that people have started to abandon it, moving to the forests and jungles to live there instead. Genetic engineer Dr Stark isn't too happy about years of progress being ditched, though, so he decides to take out his frustration on a young jungle couple, Toki and Wanda. Stark kidnaps Wanda and turns Toki into an ape, so now our newly-simian protagonist has to make his way to Stark's palace to rescue his partner. Turns out Stark didn't do a perfect job with Toki's transformation, as he's unwittingly armed our hero with the ability to spit deadly bullets at enemies. Cue a (pretty difficult) action platformer where Toki can upgrade his spit type with numerous power-ups. ■

FACT

The Mega Drive version of Toki is based on the original arcade game, but the levels have been drastically reworked and extended to the extent that the two are considered separate games.

TOM AND JERRY: FRANTIC ANTICS!

Year 1993
Publisher Hi-Tech Expressions
Developer Beam Software

ALTHOUGH IT ISN'T made clear by either the game's title or the blurb on the back of the box, Frantic Antics is actually the official tie-in of *Tom and Jerry: The Movie*, but was presumably renamed when the film was a box office flop. One of the reasons for the film's failure was that Tom and Jerry were friends rather than rivals, thereby completely removing the point of what made them popular. That's the case in the game too: playing as Tom in some levels and Jerry in others, players have to help reunite a girl called Robyn with her missing father. It's a fairly standard platformer, with the option to play in co-op mode, further pushing the 'they're pals, honest' agenda. ■

FACT

The movie also gave Tom and Jerry voices for the first time: Tom was voiced by Richard Kind (a recurring cast member of *Mad About You*) while Jerry was voiced by Dana Hill (Max from *Goof Troop*).

TOMMY LASORDA BASEBALL

Year 1989
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

IT'S CRAZY TO launch a console in North America without a sports game, so when it came to the Genesis that slot was filled by Tommy Lasorda Baseball, a Sega-developed baseball game endorsed by the then manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers. Not that the Dodgers are in there, of course, nor is Lasorda once you get beyond the title screen: with no official MLB or MLBPA licensing the game's teams are generic and its players are all fictional. Still, all 26 teams from the 1989 season are represented here regardless, with the player able to play a 30-game season in either the US League (American League) or the World League (National League). One unique feature it does have, though, is the option to make the game favour the pitcher or the batter. ■

FACT

The game was known as Super League in Japan and Europe. While the European version had the same teams as the North American one, the Japanese release had 12 teams loosely based on Japanese NPB teams.

TONY LA RUSSA BASEBALL

Year 1993
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Beyond Software

NOT CONTENT TO let Sega own the monopoly on baseball games starring managers with Italian backgrounds, EA decided it would muscle in on that highly prestigious market by enlisting the help of Tony La Russa, manager of the Oakland Athletics. This was actually the second game in the La Russa series: the first was only released on PC and C64. With the MLBPA licence intact, the game contained full stats spread over 14 categories for over 500 players from the 1992 season, making it one of the most in-depth games in the genre. There's also a heavy focus on management, right down to being able to see which players are in the showers. While it was praised for its detail, though, it was criticised for its choppy animation. ■

FACT

Tommy Lasorda won the World Series with the Dodgers (for the second time) in 1988. Tony La Russa then won it with the A's the following year. Just in case it wasn't clear how similar these game deals were.

TOP GEAR 2

Year 1994
Publisher Vic Tokai
Developer Gremlin Graphics

THE TOP GEAR series, usually published by Kemco, was renowned for bringing fast, OutRun style racing to the home. Although there were plenty of games in the series, only one of them made it to a Sega console. Based mainly on Gremlin Graphics' Lotus series of racing games, Top Gear 2 contains a hefty 64 tracks spread across 16 'countries': Australasia, France, Ireland, South America, UK, Germany, Italy, Spain, Canada, Greece, Japan, Switzerland, Egypt, India, Scandinavia and the USA. Each race has 20 competitors and the aim is simply to finish in the top 10 each time to qualify for the next race. The better you finish, though, the more money you earn to upgrade your car, so if you keep just scraping by your opponents will eventually outperform you naturally. ■

FACT

There are a total of 13 games in the Top Gear series. At the time of writing, the last was the critically panned Top Gear: RPM Tuning on Xbox and PS2.

TOTAL FOOTBALL

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Domark

ORIGINALLY DUE TO be both published and developed by Domark, the publishing duties for Total Football were taken over by Acclaim when Domark started having financial trouble. The game didn't seem likely to reverse its fortunes anyway: utilising a familiar isometric viewpoint the game looked and sounded extremely similar to EA's FIFA games. Crucially, though, it didn't play like FIFA, which is why it's generally forgotten these days. It wasn't terrible, mind you: with 50 international teams and the option to play in a league, cup or World Cup style tournament, there was enough there to keep players busy. It just didn't offer anything unique. As for Domark? It was bought out later that year and became part of a new studio called Eidos Interactive, which went on to publish Tomb Raider. ■

FACT

The SNES was to get a completely different Total Football game developed by Jon Ritman, the legendary programmer behind computer football game Match Day. That version was scrapped.

TOUGHMAN CONTEST

Year 1995
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Visual Concepts

ONE OF THE less conventional sporting licences EA has acquired over the years, Toughman Contest is based on the amateur boxing event of the same name (where boxers with no more than five wins under their belt fight in a tournament). Choosing one of 24 fictional fighters – with such questionable names as Benny Booyah, Havana Jones, T. K. O'Reilly and Hiro Sokitome – you have to take on a series of opponents in your region and defeat them all to qualify for the Toughman World Championship in Las Vegas. Beat your opponents there and you'll face off against Butterbean, the (real life) Toughman legend who's absolutely enormous and, unsurprisingly, will have you scraping yourself off the mat before you can say 'I'm not sure this is officially sanctioned'. ■

FACT

The real-life Toughman Contest was founded in Michigan in 1979 by a boxing promoter called Art Dore. At the time of writing, the contest continues annually.

TOXIC CRUSADERS

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Infogrames

THE TOXIC CRUSADERS game is based on the environmentally friendly cartoon series of the same name, which itself was based on the extremely gory *Toxic Avenger* movies created by zero budget film studio Troma. The game is mainly a beat 'em up (with the occasional shoot 'em up sections) in which players can choose between Toxie, Nozone and Junkyard as they fight their way through six stages of Radiation Ranger enemies in order to reach Czar Zoster's palace and prevent the alien Smogulans from taking over the Earth and destroying it with pollution. Players are also accompanied by Toxie's yellow ball pal Bloobie, who eats any enemies he gets his teeth on. It sort of goes without saying but *The Taming of the Shrew* this ain't. ■

FACT

Only 13 episodes of the *Toxic Crusaders* cartoon were made but, like the horror movies it's based on, it continues to enjoy a cult following to this day.

TOY STORY

Year 1995
Publisher Disney Interactive Studios / Sega
Developer Traveller's Tales

AS THE FIRST entirely computer animated movie, Pixar's theatrical debut naturally enjoyed a slew of merchandise, including the obligatory video game tie-in. There are 18 levels in this visually impressive game, which closely follows the plot of the film. While the vast majority of these stages are your typical side-scrolling platformer affairs, occasionally the game will mix things up with something different: a top-down racing stage starring RC, a separate third-person racing stage (exclusive to the Mega Drive) or even a first-person maze stage taking place inside the claw machine. While the game itself was an enjoyable enough romp, it was notable for its impressive graphics: not just the pre-rendered sprites with their Donkey Kong Country style appearance, but the fact that some background objects were actually rendered in 3D. ■

FACT

The European version of the game was made a little easier than the North American one due to the addition of a password system.

TOYS

Year 1993
Publisher Absolute Entertainment
Developer Absolute Entertainment

REMEMBER *TOYS*, THE Robin Williams movie about a young toy factory worker's battle as he tries to stop his uncle turning it into a weapons factory? Probably not, because it ended up being a bigger bomb than any of the ones in the film. Regardless, the game puts you in control of Leslie (Williams' character) as he makes use of his 'good' toys to try and defeat his uncle's 'bad' toys and ultimately take over the factory. The first three stages – the toy factory, the cafeteria and the warehouse – are played from a top-down perspective as Leslie tries to take out all the security cameras. Once this is done it's onto the final battle, where you fly a toy plane through a model of Manhattan. ■

FACT

The film's teaser trailer, where Robin Williams stands in a field and talks directly to the audience, is more memorable than the film, and was even parodied in *The Simpsons*.

TRAMPOLINE TERROR!

Year	1990
Publisher	DreamWorks
Developer	NCS

TRAMPOLINE TERROR! IS a top-down action game with puzzle elements. The beautiful planet Ahas has been surrounded by a giant multi-layered grid, placed there by the evil Balos empire. The grid is blocking the sun and if it isn't cleared the planet will eventually turn cold and all its life will die. You have to navigate the grid's 33 different layers (i.e. levels) and find the self-destruct switches on each to destroy them. The problem is, each grid is filled with enemies and trampoline squares, and if you jump on a trampoline square it will weaken and eventually disappear. This means you have to plan your route carefully to avoid removing parts of the stage that you may need to access later on. ■

FACT

The Japanese version was going to be called Explode Star but it was never released. Despite this, the game's internal code still lists the title as Explode Star in its header.

TRAYSIA

Year	1992
Publisher	Renovation Products
Developer	Riot

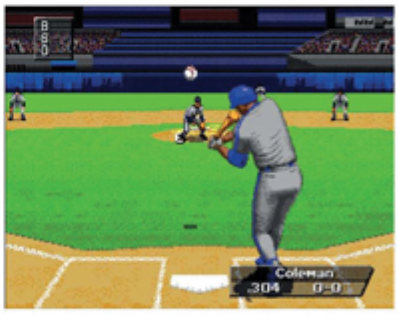
THIS RPG HAS you playing as Roy, an 18-year-old who leaves his family and friends behind him and arrives at the Kingdom of Salon looking to start a new life for himself. The only thing he has from his past is a pendant given to him by his old girlfriend Trasyia, but will he ever see her again? I mean, it would be a bit weird to name the game after her if he didn't. The game itself is fairly straightforward, with Roy forming a party of four and travelling from dungeon to dungeon. The turn-based battles involve movement to an extent, in that you can only hurt an enemy if you're near them, but the poor enemy AI means any potential strategic elements that could arise from this don't really materialise. ■

FACT

At one point Ubisoft was set to publish Renovation's games in Europe. According to UK magazine *Sega Pro*, however, Sega stepped in and ordered the deal to be scrapped for some reason.

TRIPLE PLAY '96

Year	1995
Publisher	EA Sports
Developer	Extended Play Productions



AFTER DABBLING WITH baseball games a couple of times in the years prior, EA Sports decided to finally start Triple Play, a proper annual series. Triple Play '96 was the first of these, and seemed to borrow some aspects of its design from FIFA (most notably the menus and the isometric view during outfield play). The game offers almost everything you could expect from a baseball title during that era: the full MLBPA licence with real 1995 rosters and schedules, 28 unique stadiums, a full 162-game season, the ability to create your own team and a battery back-up to save everything. The only thing it didn't have was the MLB licence for real team names and logos. ■

FACT

Triple Play '96 contains over 2,500 frames of animation, capturing such delights as the pitcher spitting, outfielders colliding into each other and even fans falling over the barrier when catching a home run.

TRIPLE PLAY: GOLD EDITION

Year	1996
Publisher	EA Sports
Developer	EA Canada

TRIPLE PLAY '96 was received well enough for EA to continue the series, but by this point the PlayStation had appeared on the scene and the publisher was committed to moving all its franchises to this new, shiny polygonal future. While the PlayStation and PC were treated to Triple Play '97, then, Genesis owners instead got the Gold Edition, which was essentially a slightly upgraded version of Triple Play '96 with a few new features. A new 'pro' mode allowed experts to increase the difficulty, while the pitching controls were improved to allow players to choose their pitch from a menu before aiming it. Those aside, most of the other improvements were pretty standard: updated stats and rosters, that sort of thing. ■

FACT

While the Gold Edition was still missing the MLB licence, Triple Play '97 had it, meaning PlayStation and PC owners got real team names and logos. Those lucky dogs.

TROUBLE SHOOTER

Year 1992
Publisher Vic Tokai
Developer Vic Tokai

KING FREDERICK'S SON has been kidnapped by a mutated military weapons expert called Blackball, and since he's the only heir to the throne that's a problem. To prevent an international incident kicking off, the 'Trouble Shooter' is called to rescue the young prince. The twist is, the Trouble Shooter consists of two extremely attractive young women, Madison and Crystal: it's the whole 'wow, these cute girls are actually badass' thing you got a lot in those days, you see. The game is a shoot 'em up in which the player controls both women, who fly around in jetpacks. Madison is essentially your 'ship', while Crystal is your supporting fire: you can press the C button to toggle her direction of fire left and right. ■

FACT

There are claims that the game takes influence from the popular manga and anime series *Dirty Pair*, which is about two similar female mercenaries working as 'Trouble Consultants'.

TROY AIKMAN NFL FOOTBALL

Year 1994
Publisher Tradewest
Developer Leland Interactive Media

IF YOU'VE BEEN reading this book cover-to-cover, you're probably thinking: 'I haven't seen an American football game for about 10 pages, I wonder what's gone wrong'. Fret not, because Tradewest (who were just about to become Williams Entertainment) has arrived to save the day with this pixellated pigskin production starring Dallas Cowboys quarterback Troy Aikman. Unlike many American football games that licensed player names but not the official teams, this goes in the opposite direction: the NFL licence means all team nicknames and logos are present, but the players are all nameless. This does allow for a fairly unique feature, though, in which each player has a 'budget' they can use to spend on certain positions before each game to increase specific nameless players' stats. ■

FACT

Troy Aikman stayed with the Cowboys for all 12 seasons of his career, winning the Super Bowl with them three times and being crowned the MVP of Super Bowl VII when they crushed the Bills 52-17.

TRUE LIES

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Beam Software

BASED ON THE Arnold Schwarzenegger film that's usually the fifth or six one people remember when they're trying to list them, the video game version of *True Lies* is not as immediately action-packed as you may expect given the star involved. Playing as Arnie's character Harry Tasker, it's up to you to stop the terrorist group Crimson Jihad and prevent a 'nuclear holocaust' (the box's words, not mine). To do this, you have to play through 10 different missions, which don't necessarily always involve pumping bullets into everyone you see. Granted, there's still plenty of gunplay to be had, and enemies die in a surprisingly gory manner to boot, but on occasion a more subtle approach is needed as Harry keeps a low profile. ■

FACT

Arnie and Jamie Lee Curtis's kiss in True Lies was nominated for the prestigious Best Kiss award at the MTV Movie Awards but tragically missed out to Jim Carrey and Lauren Holly in Dumb & Dumber.

TRUXTON

Year 1989
Publisher Sega
Developer Toaplan

TRUXTON WAS ORIGINALLY released in arcades by Taito and Midway, before being ported to the Mega Drive the following year. You play as the underwhelmingly named Tom (sorry, any Toms reading this), a chap from the planet Borogo who climbs aboard his Super Fighter spaceship to fight against the Gidans, an alien force who have blown up the Borogo's cargo barge and are on their way to take the planet over. The game is a vertically scrolling shoot 'em up with five lengthy stages, in which players can collect three different types of weapon: the conventional 'Power Shots' (which are normal red bullets), the Truxton Beam (which fires green arrow-shaped shots) and the Thunder Laser (which fires a continuous blue beam that locks onto enemies). ■

FACT

Truxton has a notorious bug that makes boss fights easy. If you pause the game while triggering a bomb, the bomb will continue to do damage. Unpause after 20–30 seconds and the boss will be destroyed.

TURBO OUTRUN

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega / Tiertex

THE FIRST PROPER sequel to OutRun hit arcades three years after the first game, and three years after that was ported to the Mega Drive exclusively in Japan in Europe. While the general aim remains the same – race as quickly as you can, trying to reach each checkpoint before time runs out – Turbo OutRun has a far more linear approach, with set stages rather than forked paths at each checkpoint. That said, it's a significantly longer game than the original: rather than driving through five checkpoints in one region you instead have to drive right across America by starting at New York, going through 16 different multi-checkpoint locations, and ending up at Los Angeles. A new Turbo button also lets you trigger a short nitro burst when you hit your top speed. ■

FACT

If you love the game but you're bad at it, plug in a second controller and press A, C, B, A, B, C, B, C, B, A, C, A. When the timer reaches 1, it will stay there instead of running out.

TURMA DA MÔNICA NA TERRA DOS MONSTROS

Year 1994
Publisher TecToy
Developer Westone / TecToy

TURMA DA MÔNICA (which translates to Monica's gang) is a popular comic series in Brazil which started in 1959 and spawned a bunch of spin-off comics, merchandise, and animated TV shows. Mônica has also starred in three Sega games that may be familiar to western gamers. Sega's Brazilian distributor TecToy decided to take the Wonder Boy series of games and repurpose them with Turma da Mônica characters instead. This happened with two Master System games before Mônica moved to the Mega Drive with this reworked version of Wonder Boy in Monster World. The game plays the same as the western one, but Wonder Boy and his sword have been replaced with Mônica and her stuffed bunny Samson, and NPCs have been swapped out for characters from the comic. ■

FACT

Mônica didn't actually make her debut until 1963: before then, the comic was focused on a dog called Blu and a child genius called Franklin (who are still around, but as minor characters).

TURRICAN

Year 1991
Publisher Ballistic
Developer The Code Monkeys

WHEN TURRICAN LAUNCHED on home computers in Europe in 1990 (in particular the Amiga), players and critics alike praised its intense action, its incredible soundtrack and its massive stages. Its publisher Rainbow Arts handed the licence for console ports to Accolade, which then released an Mega Drive version under its Ballistic brand. While its intense run and gun action initially appears to have been ported over well, the Mega Drive port did draw some criticism, particularly for its increased difficulty (the player takes around four times more damage than they did in the home versions). This combined with its awkward controls and its different, less memorable music resulted in a port that, while still praised overall, is considered inferior to the source material. ■

FACT

The Turrican series is difficult to follow on the Mega Drive because the sequels were renamed. So you know: Turrican 1, 2 and 3 are Turrican, Universal Soldier and Mega Turrican respectively.

TWIN COBRA: DESERT ATTACK HELICOPTER

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Toaplan / GRC

COMMANDER ANZIGA IS the evil dictator of the (fictional but not really) nation of Kaban. It's up to you, playing as 'an elite chopper jockey' (which means something else where I come from), to penetrate Kaban's border and destroy Anziga's headquarters in an attempt to end the impending war. A port of Toaplan's 1987 arcade game, Twin Cobra is a vertically scrolling shoot 'em up where you fly your helicopter through 10 increasingly difficult stages. As far as shoot 'em ups go it's a pretty straightforward one, though still entertaining due to Toaplan's general mastery of the genre. There are four different weapon types to collect, you can collect extra power-ups to make them more powerful… you've seen all this in plenty of other games, but it's still executed perfectly well here. ■

FACT

Some claim the 'Twin' part of the title refers to the arcade version's two-player mode, which the Genesis version doesn't have. There are 'twin Cobra' helicopters (with twin engines) in real life, though.

TWIN HAWK

Year 1990
Publisher Sega
Developer Toaplan

ANOTHER ONE OF Toaplan's arcade shoot 'em ups, Twin Hawk puts you behind the cockpit of a biplane as you fly through four stages, gunning down other planes, tanks and ships along the way. It plays like a run of the mill shoot 'em up for the most part, but it does have one interesting feature in the shape of its support squadron system. Whereas other games let you trigger a huge bomb as a special weapon, here you instead spawn six support aircraft which fly alongside you, significantly increasing your firepower. As each aircraft is taken out, they'll dive bomb towards the nearest enemy to try and take them out kamikaze style. Alternatively, you can hit B to make all your remaining support planes divebomb together. ■

FACT

Beat the fourth stage and you'll be met with the message: 'Congratulations! Now you must fight the enemy. Good luck!' You'll then move onto stage 5, and the game basically loops all over again.

TWO CRUDE DUDES

Year 1992
Publisher Data East / Sega
Developer ISCO / Opera House

IN THE YEAR 2010, New York was devastated by a series of nuclear explosions. A decade later, a mad scientist gathers 100 mutated survivors and transforms them into vicious fighting machines. Arming them with weapons, he tells them to go out and take over New York for him. You play as Biff and Spike, the titular two crude dudes, whose mission is to defeat these mutated meatheads in order to save New York. Two Crude Dudes is a side scrolling beat 'em up similar to other Data East games of the era. Its main gimmick, however, is the ability to pick up and throw a bunch of objects with ease (even cars). This, combined with the game's unique sense of humour, makes it one of the better Data East titles. ■

FACT

The original arcade game, simply called Two Crude, teases a sequel in the ending by saying: 'Keep going, Two Crude, for another combat!'. This line was removed from the Mega Drive version.

TWO TRIBES: POPULOUS II

Year 1993
Publisher Virgin Games
Developer PanelComp

RELEASED EXCLUSIVELY IN Europe (though a North American version was originally planned under the title Wrath of the Gods), Populous II builds on Peter Molyneux's original god simulator in numerous ways, resulting in a game generally considered to be the definitive entry in the series. Whereas the original Populous focused on nondescript gods, this sequel is specifically based on Greek mythology and has you playing as one of Zeus's children as you take on other deities. The first game gave the player eight different godly powers, but this time you have a hefty 29, split into six different categories: People, Vegetation, Earth, Air, Fire and Water. Want to create a baptismal font to convert enemies to your side, or just say 'never mind' and start a rain of fire? You can. ■

FACT

When he was promoting the Amiga version, Molyneux told UK magazine *The One* that the game 'runs at 17 frames per second, which is as fast as your average shoot 'em up'. A rare exaggeration from him, there.

ULTIMATE MORTAL KOMBAT 3

Year 1996
Publisher Williams / Acclaim
Developer Avalanche Software

MORTAL KOMBAT 3 was generally well-received by fans but there were still a few things that weren't so popular, most notably the decision to ditch some well-loved characters like Scorpion and Kitana. Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3, then, was an updated version that righted these wrongs and added a few extra surprises. As well as reinstating Scorpion, Kitana, Jade, Mileena and the classic masked Sub-Zero to the roster, the game also adds new red and purple ninjas called Ermac and Rain. New stages were also added, but it wasn't all good news: because of the Mega Drive's limitations, other cuts had to be made. As such, the Animality finishers were taken out of the game, as was the four-armed character Sheeva. ■

FACT

A morphing ninja called Chameleon was removed at the last minute but can be unlocked using a cheat cartridge (it crashes the game, though). He didn't officially appear until Mortal Kombat Trilogy launched later that year.

ULTIMATE QIX

Year	1991
Publisher	Taito
Developer	ITL

BETTER KNOWN BY its arcade title Volfied, Ultimate Qix is the sequel to the 1981 arcade game Qix, this time with a crazy plot. You are the pilot of the spaceship *Monotros*, returning to your home planet Volfied. When you get there, you discover that Volfied has been taken over by an unknown alien force. A distress call reveals that there are still survivors, but they're hiding under the planet's surface. This is all a convoluted way to justify a game that plays similarly to its predecessor, in which you have to draw lines across a grid with your ship to fill in boxes, while ensuring the various enemies don't touch any lines as you're drawing them. Fill in over 80 per cent of a stage and it's off to the next one. ■

FACT

Qix was created by the brilliantly named husband and wife team Randy and Sandy Pfeiffer. The name came from Randy's custom car licence plate, JUS4QIX (just for kicks).

ULTIMATE SOCCER

Year	1993
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Rage Software

BEFORE RAGE SOFTWARE brought its Striker series to Sega consoles, it teamed up with Sega to launch Ultimate Soccer in Europe. This football game looks and plays a lot like Striker, but has the added bonus of copious cameos from Sonic the Hedgehog, who appears in many of the icons in the game's main menu and options screen. There are 64 national teams to choose from, and players can opt to play either a friendly, a knockout cup, a league or a World Cup style tournament. There are also a host of options to choose from, ranging from the normal stuff like weather conditions to less common ones such as how much the ball sticks to the players' feet while dribbling, or whether inertia is applied to player movement. ■

FACT

Ultimate Soccer not only lets four players take part with a four-player adaptor attached, it also supports eight players if you plug in two of them.

UNCHARTED WATERS

Year	1992
Publisher	Koei
Developer	Koei

THE PREDECESSOR TO Koei's New Horizons, Uncharted Waters is a seafaring simulator where your general aim is to set sail in search of fortune and fame in order to restore your family's prestige (which went down with your old man when he died in a storm). Playing as a teenage Portuguese navigator (his canon name is Leon but you get to name him and generate his stats before you start), you can choose to build your fortune however you see fit, whether that involves exploring new lands in search of treasure, getting involved in trading, or battling with other ships. Although the game is relatively open-ended, there's still a potential ending: if you build enough fame to befriend the Portuguese Princess Christiana, marrying her will end the game. ■

FACT

A comic adaptation of Uncharted Waters was released in Japan in 1991 (after it launched on the NES), under the name *Age of Discovery: Pirate Knight Leon*.

UNIVERSAL SOLDIER

Year	1992
Publisher	Ballistic
Developer	The Code Monkeys

ONE OF THE odder examples of a movie tie-in on the Mega Drive, Universal Soldier originally had absolutely nothing to do with the Jean-Claude Van Damme action movie of the same name. In fact, the game is actually Turrican II, which was in the process of being ported to the Mega Drive when Accolade got the *Universal Soldier* rights. Rather than playing as freedom fighter Bren McGuire in the year 3025, then, you're instead Van Damme's character Luc Deveraux as he does battle with his rival Sergeant Scott (Dolph Lundgren). To be fair, it isn't just a case of swapping out some of the sprites (although that's part of it): the three shoot 'em up stages from Turrican II were removed and replaced with brand new stages set in Vietnam, a fortress and a junkyard. ■

FACT

When two direct-to-TV sequels to *Universal Soldier* were created, Van Damme decided not to take part. He did return for parts 4, 5 and 6(!) though.

UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS '95

Year 1994
Publisher Sport Accolade
Developer Accolade

UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS WAS a trilogy of American football games that launched on the PC between 1993 and 1995. The second game in the series was the only one to receive a console port, and the Genesis was the only system to get it. The game has the NFLPA licence and boasts over 1,400 real player names, with the top 150 of these also getting digitised photos that show up next to their stats. The game switches between two camera angles: a distant overhead one to help with punts, passes and analysing formations before the snap, and a closer one that kicks in during rushing plays and after passes have been caught. Al Michaels provides the occasional soundbite: these are surprisingly good quality for the Genesis. ■

FACT

For those not familiar with the term, 'unneccesary roughness' is a call made in American football when a player grabs another player's facemark, headbutts him or does anything else beyond what's necessary to block or tackle someone.

URBAN STRIKE

Year 1994
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Foley Hi-Tech Systems

THE THIRD GAME in the Strike series (and the last to be released on the Mega Drive), Urban Strike plays similarly to its predecessors Desert Strike and Jungle Strike but this time the action is set in North America. You have to take down H. R. Malone, a millionaire media mogul and cult leader who is secretly trying to create an enormous superweapon. The game's 10 stages take place in the likes of Hawaii, Mexico, San Francisco, New York and Las Vegas, and players aren't limited to only flying in your standard helicopter. As well as a larger helicopter called the Blackhawke (which is used for rescue missions), you can also drive a Ground Assault Vehicle and even go on foot for some missions as you infiltrate an oil rig, Alcatraz and a casino. ■

FACT

If you start blowing up the slot machines in the Vegas stage you'll eventually find Elvis hidden inside one of them. He'll do a little dance but he can't die. Again, I mean.

VALIS

Year 1991
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Telenet Japan

VALIS WAS ORIGINALLY released on numerous Japanese home computers and the Famicom in the mid '80s, before this Mega Drive remake arrived half a decade later. It tells the story of Yuko Asou (or Yuko Ahso as the manual calls her), an average Japanese high school student whose heart is completely balanced with Yin and Yang, making her the greatest warrior of all time. Yuko is given the sword of Valis, and must use it to defeat the evil General Rogles and his five Dark Lords. For the most part it's a standard hack and slash platformer, but Yuko can also collect power-ups for her sword that let it fire bullets, lasers, arrows and the like, and can also acquire magic spells from the bosses she's defeated. ■

FACT

'Where's Valis II?' you may be asking. If you've been reading the book in order, you've already seen it: Syd of Valis was a 'chibi' (cute-ified) remake of that game.

VALIS III

Year 1991
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Telenet Japan

RELEASED BEFORE THE first Valis game on the Genesis – yes, you read that correctly – Valis III offers similar action platforming, but with a couple of new features. This time Yuko is trying to save Dreamland from Glames, the king of the Dark World, who has his own evil sword called the Leethus sword. Only the Valis can stop it, so off goes Yuko for another adventure. This time she isn't alone, however, as she's joined by two other characters. One of these is her newfound sister Valna (who carries a magical staff) and a Dark World warrior maiden called Cham (who has a whip). Each character has their own distinct strengths, so the player can usually swap between them at will. ■

FACT

Craving more Valis? Well, why not track down Valis X, a 2006 Japanese visual novel for PC filled with copious nudity and lots of tentacle-related erotica? Actually, hang on…

VAPOR TRAIL

Year 1991
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Data East

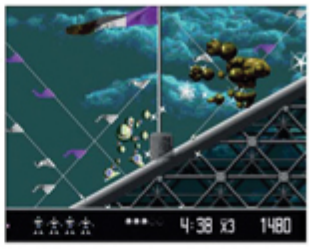
IN THE YEAR 1999, a terrorist group called DAGGER gains control of the satellite communication system linking the world's military bases, and threatens to destroy the entire planet with nuclear missiles if all governments don't surrender. If only there was some sort of way to defeat them, preferably by flying a single ship at them and shooting a lot of other vehicles in the process. Oh, that's right, there's Vapor Trail, the Special Forces air unit. One or two players can take on this vertically scrolling shoot 'em up, whose main gimmick is the ability to choose between three different planes. The Sylph is your standard all-rounder, the Valkyrie is powerful but slow, and the Seylen is extremely fast and can shoot behind it, but its forward shots are weak. ■

FACT

When you complete the Japanese version, you see the pilot sitting on the plane's nose, smoking a cigarette and gazing at the stars. In the North American version the cigarette (and its Vapor Trail, if you will) has been removed.

VECTORMAN

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer BlueSky Software



WHEN THE HUMAN race leaves Earth to look for new planets to colonise, they leave all their polluted waste behind and assign a bunch of robots called Orbots to clean it up for them. Unfortunately, when Orbot leader Raster has his head replaced with a nuke by mistake, he goes mad and starts reprogramming all the Orbots to kill all humans when they return. One Orbot called Vectorman was out in space when this order was transmitted, so when he returns to Earth he finds a robo-revolt that only he can fix. Vectorman was most notable for its use of 'Vector Piece Animation', a special technique in which the character is made of 23 individual sprites and they all move together, giving him more fluid motion. ■

FACT

Random copies of the game showed a 'You Win' message when it was completed, along with a phone number to claim a $25,000 prize. Unfortunately for the press, the winner was a 12-year-old called Keolamanaokalahuinui Kaula.

VECTORMAN 2

Year 1996
Publisher Sega
Developer BlueSky Software

SEGA WAS CONFIDENT enough with the quality of the first VectorMan that it got BlueSky Software to start working on the sequel before waiting to see if the original game was going to sell in big enough numbers to justify it. The second game has our ball-based hero discovering a strain of mutant insects on Earth and deciding to head underground to take them out before they destroy the planet. Like its predecessor, VectorMan is a run and gun action platformer where the hero's main gimmick is the ability to morph to perform different skills. These morphs come in two forms: 'assimilations', where enemies drop morph power-ups and he uses these to copy their abilities, and vehicle morphs (a helicopter, tornado, tank or roller skates) which last for entire stages. ■

FACT

A few months before VectorMan 2 was released, Sega announced a deal with Ideal Entertainment to make a VectorMan movie. Naturally, it never happened.

VENOM AND SPIDER-MAN: SEPARATION ANXIETY

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Software Creations

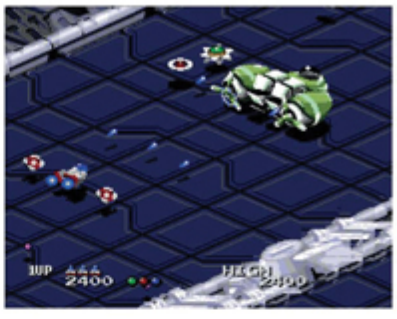
THE SEQUEL TO Spider-Man and Venom: Maximum Carnage, this similarly presented beat 'em up is based on the comic book series *Venom: Separation Anxiety* (which explains why Spider-Man doesn't get top billing here). Venom and Spidey are reluctantly teaming up once again, this time to stop the sinister Life Foundation organisation from letting five new alien symbiotes bond with their host bodies and create havoc throughout the world. Playing as either of the pair (or both in two-player co-op), you have to defeat the five symbiotes (Riot, Phage, Lasher, Agony and Scream) before encountering Carnage in a surprise final boss fight. Along the way you can call for help from some of your superhero buddies, including Daredevil, Ghost Rider, Hawkeye and Captain America. ■

FACT

Despite being named after the *Separation Anxiety* comic series, the game actually includes more plot points from another Venom series called *Lethal Protector*.

VIEWPOINT

Year 1994
Publisher Sammy
Developer Nexus Interact



MOST SHOOT 'EM ups in the '80s and '90s scrolled either horizontally or vertically, but on rare occasions you'd get one that decided to go wild and use an isometric viewpoint instead. Sega's Zaxxon did this most effectively in 1982, and more than a decade later Sammy decided to try it in Viewpoint, a game originally released on Neo-Geo arcade hardware before coming to the Genesis. Players take charge of a Byupo, a special fighter ship that's armed with both rapid fire shots and a charged shot that can do huge damage. Along the way the player can also collect various bombs lying around: these are one of three colours and fire either a shockwave, a homing missile or a wall of flame. ■

FACT

Critics were generally positive when reviewing Viewpoint, but many of them also pointed out the extreme slowdown that happens every time more than a handful of enemies are on the screen.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 2

Year 1996
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega / Success

SEGA'S VIRTUA FIGHTER series was truly revolutionary. When the first game launched in arcades in 1993 it was the first ever polygonal fighting game, then the sequel completely blew it out of the water by doubling the frame rate to 60 frames per second and featuring far more detailed characters. For some strange reason, Sega also decided to port Virtua Fighter 2 to the Mega Drive, despite its 16-bit console being nowhere near powerful enough to handle it. The compromise made was an interesting one: the Mega Drive version of Virtua Fighter 2 is a 2D fighting game that somehow manages to cram in a surprising number of moves (about as many as in the first game) despite the removal of the third dimension. Not a classic by any means but a curious one. ■

FACT

Virtua Fighter 2 spawned one of the most infamous bootleg games on the Mega Drive, Virtua Fighter 2 vs Tekken 2, seemingly released by Taiwanese 'developer' Gamtec.

VIRTUA RACING

Year 1994
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer Sega

THERE HAD BEEN other arcade racing games that had dabbled with polygonal graphics in the past (the most noble being Atari's Hard Drivin'), but 1992's Virtua Racing raised the bar to such an extent that it's widely regarded to be the game that not only revolutionised the racing genre, but also made it clear that polygonal games were the next direction the entire games industry should be headed in general. While it was considered a given that a game so technically advanced would be strictly limited to arcades, Sega surprised everyone a couple of years later when it announced that Virtua Racing would be coming to the humble Mega Drive. The secret was the Sega Virtua Processor, a special chip that could be incorporated into a Mega Drive cartridge and handle the scaling and rotation of polygons: similar to the Super FX chip Nintendo used for SNES games like Star Fox, but significantly more powerful. The resulting Mega Drive port of Virtua Racing was nothing short of a technical miracle: while the game clearly looked less detailed than the arcade version and ran at a much slower frame rate (about 15fps instead of 30), it still managed to fit in all three tracks – Big Forest with its ferris wheel, Bay Bridge with… well, its huge bridge and Acropolis with its tight hairpin – and even a split-screen two-player mode. Such wizardry came at a price, though: Virtua Racing cost $100 in the US and £70 in the UK, making it the most expensive game on the system. ■

FACT

Virtua Racing would be the only Mega Drive game to use the Virtua Processor. There were plans to bring Virtua Fighter and Daytona USA to the Mega Drive too but these were held back for the Sega Saturn.

VIRTUAL BART

Year 1994
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Sculptured Software

ANOTHER MINI-GAME COMPILATION in the style of Bart's Nightmare, Virtual Bart opens with a Springfield Elementary science fair, where Martin has created a virtual reality machine. Bart decides to enter it, and finds himself stuck in his virtual worlds. The only way he can escape is by clearing all six mini games. These include a trio of platformers: one called Dino Bart where he's a dinosaur, another called Baby Bart where he's a toddler and one called Pork Factory Pig Bart where he's a… yup, they're all pretty self-explanatory. Joining these are a post-apocalyptic motorbike game called Doomsday Bart which borrows liberally from Road Rash, a VR trip down Mount Splashmore's waterslide, and a shooting gallery where Bart has to hit his classmates with rotten tomatoes. ■

FACT

Acclaim would lose the Simpsons licence shortly after this and it would spend years jumping around between Fox Interactive, Konami, THQ and Vivendi before finally settling with EA, who (at the time of writing) seems content making mobile games with it.

VIRTUAL PINBALL

Year 1993
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer BudgeCo

IN 1982, GAME designer Bill Budge created the Pinball Construction Set and released it for home computers through Electronic Arts. A decade later, Budge and EA joined forces again and updated the formula with Virtual Pinball for the Mega Drive. Players can choose from six different background themes (including a gory background and a pool table) and create their own pinball tables by choosing from a menu of 38 different parts including bumpers, flippers, walls, targets, tracks and the like. If players didn't feel like the creative type, the game also included 29 premade tables made using the in-game tools. According to the manual, six of these tables were created by an 'incredible mystery pinball guru genius'. To this day, it's not clear who that was. ■

FACT

One of the preset tables had the logo of American game magazine *GamePro* on the middle of the table. *GamePro* gave the game a high score, which was a happy coincidence.

VR TROOPERS

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Syrox Developments

POWER RANGERS THIS, Power Rangers that. What do you do when you're bored playing games based on Saban's well-known Japanese superhero TV show? Why, you play a game based on Saban's less well-known Japanese superhero TV show. VR Troopers is a one-on-one fighting game with a story mode in which players choose one of the three VR Troopers – J. B. Reese, Ryan Steel or Kaitlin Star – as they try to escape a virtual reality arcade game they've been unwittingly trapped in by the evil Grimlord. Your Trooper of choice must fight various enemies from the show including Tankotron, Decimator, Darkheart, Magician and Kongbot as they work towards a final clash with Kamelion. Its fighting controls are fairly basic, with only three buttons: punch, kick and throw. ■

FACT

Much like Power Rangers, *VR Troopers* took footage from Japanese tokusatsu children's superhero shows: in this case, three different shows from the Metal Hero Series.

WACKY WORLDS CREATIVITY STUDIO

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Headgames / Nu Romantic Productions

WACKY WORLDS WAS the first game published under the Sega Club label aimed at younger gamers. It's a fairly limited animated sticker book where the player chooses between six different locations – a sci-fi planet, a fairytale kingdom, a monster movie, a safari island, a toy house and under the sea – and then places animated stickers on the screen. Although each world has its own specific stickers, you can still apply stickers from other worlds (which is about as wacky as it gets, to be fair). Players can also change the game's music by applying song stickers: these play certain sounds and can be stacked in a different order to change the music accordingly. The likes of Sonic, ToeJam & Earl and Ecco the Dolphin also make cameo appearances. ■

FACT

Wacky Worlds was bundled with the Mega Mouse, presumably in an attempt to stir up the same sort of excitement as Nintendo's Mario Paint. With no drawing tools though, a controller works perfectly fine.

WARDNER

Year 1991
Publisher Mentrix Software
Developer Visco Corporation

ALSO KNOWN BY its American arcade name of Pyros, Wardner is an action platformer about a young lad called Dover and his girlfriend Mia who find themselves lost in a forest one night. Suddenly, a green ghost appears out of nowhere and kidnaps Mia, claiming he's doing so on behalf of the mysterious Wardner. Dover must explore six stages – the woods, Wardner's 'House of Tricks', the lava-filled Forest of the Dead, two floors of Wardner's Castle and finally a hidden underground dungeon – to try and get Mia back. Dover can throw fireballs at enemies to defeat them: at the beginning of the game the fly in a low arc, but he can occasionally visit shops that let him fire shots in different directions (such as zig-zags or completely straight). ■

FACT

Wardner was planned for the NES, the PC Engine and the PC Engine CD-ROM². All versions were cancelled, though it did get a Famicom Disk System port.

WARLOCK

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Realtime Associates

THE *WARLOCK* TRILOGY of horror films told the story of a seventeenth century warlock who's sent to the twentieth century by Satan so he can escape a witch-hunter who's trying to execute him. In this video game spin-off, based loosely on the events of the second movie, you play as a nameless druid who's trying to collect six ancient runestones before the warlock can get to them. If the warlock can gather them all, you see, he can undo the Earth's creation, which is far from ideal. The druid can collect various spells to help him on his quest, such as smart bombs, healing spells and tremors. He can also attack with a special magical orb which can be moved around the screen by holding down the A button. ■

FACT

Enter the password PINGP to play a hidden Pong mini-game where the druid and the warlock fire the orb at each other. There's also a shoot 'em up hidden in the game's code.

WARPSPEED

Year 1993
Publisher Accolade
Developer Accolade

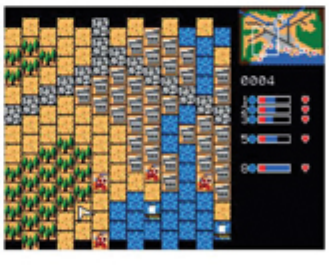
ANOTHER OF ACCOLADE'S unlicensed Mega Drive releases, WarpSpeed is a space flight simulator where the player takes on a variety of missions which generally tend to involve shooting a lot of things. There are seven different scenarios to choose from, each containing 1–8 'quadrants' (stages) full of alien ships. These scenarios range from a basic training mission, where you have to clear a single quadrant of enemies, to more complex ones such as Carrier Wars (where you have to take out enemy carriers before they release swarms of enemy fighters), Space Maze (where there's a hidden route through all eight quadrants) or Skirmish (where a storm has knocked out a bunch of sensors and your radar can only pick up enemies directly surrounding you). ■

FACT

The game's box claims that it 'put[s] you so close to the combat that your eyebrows may get fried'. At the time of writing, no eyebrow ignition mishaps have been reported to date.

WARRIOR OF ROME

Year 1991
Publisher Micronet
Developer Micronet



HAVE YOU EVER wondered what it would be like to be Julius Caesar as he and his army conquered the world for Rome? Have you ever pictured it as a slow-paced real-time strategy game? Well, you're in luck, because Warrior of Rome is that very game. Playing as the big guy himself, you command your army as you take on four separate missions: getting your soldiers to their waiting ships at Hagia Triada in Crete, fighting an epic sea battle in the Mediterranean, ploughing your way through Egypt's barricades as you take control of the country, and finally storming the palace to rescue Cleopatra. During each turn you get to decide how each of your units behave, with clashes switching to a side-on view where you watch the outcome. ■

FACT

The game ends with Caesar letting a traitorous Roman go free, leading to Cleopatra's immortal line: 'Why do you not punish him? He can never return to Rome. If he does he will surely be killed by his superiors. But enough of that. I'm tired, let's dine.'

WARRIOR OF ROME II

Year 1992
Publisher Micronet
Developer Micronet

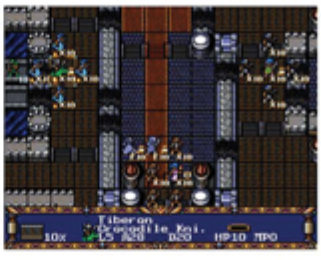
IF YOU THOUGHT taking over Egypt was a big deal, wait until you – as Julius Caesar once again – have to command your armies to suppress the rebellion in Asia. There are three separate modes here: a single-player mode (where you can choose one of 20 maps to play through), a split-screen two-player mode (with 44 maps), and the main Campaign mode. This has 15 stages in total and sees you trying to bring all 15 areas under your control in order to stop the revolt. If all of this looks a little complex, the game comes with an 80-page manual that comes with an extremely useful 'Beginner's Edition' section at the end which gives you a 27-step guide to playing your first mission. ■

FACT

According to the Roman historian Suetonius, Caesar didn't actually say 'Et tu, Brute?' when he was assassinated. He believes he didn't say anything at all. Take that, Shakespeare.

WARSONG

Year 1991
Publisher Treco
Developer CareerSoft



BETTER KNOWN THESE days by its Japanese name Langrisser, Warsong is a complex RPG whose battles are carried out in a turn-based strategy style. You play as Prince Garett, the heir to the Baltian throne, who's been ordered by his father to flee to the countryside to escape a siege by the Dalsis Empire. Garett – accompanied by the king's sword master Baldarov – has to wander the land in search of allies to join a new army, so he can return to the Castle of Baltia and give the Dalsis Empire a jolly good punt in the rump. Warsong's mechanics are more detailed than those of most turn-based strategies of the era, from the various rules when moving across the 14 different types of terrain to the ability to hire nameless soldiers to boost your numbers. ■

FACT

There were five games in the Langrisser series. The other four were only released in Japan, but a 2015 spin-off called Langrisser Re:Incarnation Tensei came to the 3DS in the west.

WAYNE GRETZKY AND THE NHLPA ALL-STARS

Year 1995
Publisher Time Warner Interactive
Developer Time Warner Interactive

DESPITE SOUNDING LIKE a Saturday morning cartoon where Wayne Gretzky and a bunch of hockey players stop a bunch of evil mutants polluting the planet, WGATNHLPAAS (as the cool kids call it) is a straightforward ice hockey game that contains the NHLPA licence, and therefore the real names of over 600 NHL players (but, as you've probably figured by this point in the book, not the NHL licence for real team names and logos). As well as unofficial versions of all 26 NHL teams there are also six international All-Star teams you can choose for exhibition matches. Players can choose a full 84-game season or a best-of-seven playoff series, and can choose between Simulation mode (where there are penalties and various other rules) or Arcade mode (where it's a fast-paced crunchfest). ■

FACT

This was the first game in a three-year deal between Gretzky and Time Warner Interactive. The second was Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey for the Nintendo 64.

WAYNE'S WORLD

Year 1993
Publisher THQ
Developer Gray Matter Inc

WHILE SOME MOVIE tie-ins tend to stick pretty closely to the plot of the film, others take a wild tangent and do something completely different. It's safe to say that Wayne's World – based on the *Saturday Night Live* sketch turned movie – takes the latter approach. Our heroes Wayne and Garth have been sucked into a cursed arcade machine called Zantar, and Garth has been kidnapped by Zantar himself, so Wayne has to make his way through the game's four stages – Kramer's Music Store, Stan Mikita's Donut Shop, the Gasworks nightclub and suburbia – to rescue him, all while firing soundwaves from his magical guitar to defeat monster bagpipes, accordions and disco balls. Safe to say nobody confused this one for Warrior of Rome II. ■

FACT

The game's code includes an ending monologue for Wayne which was never used. Among other things, he says 'being a gimp would be a punishable offence' if he ran the world, so it's probably best it was cut.

WEAPONLORD

Year 1995
Publisher Namco
Developer Visual Concepts

ONE OF THE more surprisingly deep one-on-one fighting games released during the 16-bit era, Weaponlord's development was led by James Goddard and Dave Winstead, who had both worked for Capcom on the various Street Fighter II updates (Champion Edition, Super etc). The game is aimed at the more 'hardcore' fighting community, meaning while it only has seven characters to choose from, each of them has a moveset much larger than most other fighting games at the time. The manual is packed with information on techniques like takedowns, guard drops, power deflects, down strikes, thrust blocks, frenzies and more, leading to a game that was considered ultimately rewarding for those who put the time in to learn it, but a little too full-on for newcomers. ■

FACT

Weaponloard was also designed with the XBAND video game modem in mind, allowing players to fight online. It was the only Genesis game with the XBAND logo on the box.

WHEEL OF FORTUNE

Year 1992
Publisher GameTek
Developer Imagitec Design

WHEEL OF FORTUNE is something of an institution in America. It's been on US television in some form or another since 1975, and the version with Pat Sajak and Vanna White has been going since 1983, meaning poor Vanna's been getting paid a fortune to turn letters around for nearly four decades. This Genesis version is a faithful recreation of the show, other than you actually getting real prizes when you win, of course. There are over 4,500 puzzles to work your way through, and while most of them are still easy enough to solve these days (Golden Wedding Anniversary, Mickey Mouse) others are a bit out of date now (such as Annette Funicello or the ridiculously wordy White House Chief of Staff John Sununu). ■

FACT

If the puzzle in the screenshot has you stumped, the answer is 'In a Roundabout Way'.

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS CARMEN SANDIEGO?

Year 1992
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer EA Canada

THE CARMEN SANDIEGO series of edutainment games kicked off with Where in the World… in 1985, which was eventually released on the Mega Drive seven years later. You play as a rookie sleuth in the ACME Detective Agency and your job is to apprehend a series of crooks from the V.I.L.E. organisation (led by Carmen Sandiego), who have been stealing famous objects from around the world. You do this by interviewing people at the crime scene to get clues about where they headed next, using the included World Almanac book to figure out the destination, flying there and repeating the process, following the trail until you catch up with them. In this way the player learns about the various countries in the game. ■

FACT

Carmen Sandiego was named after Brazilian singer Carmen Miranda and the city of San Diego. She was chosen to be the head villain by the team's project manager, who thought she sounded exotic.

WHERE IN TIME IS CARMEN SANDIEGO?

Year 1992
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer EA Canada

WHEN IT CAME to porting a second Carmen Sandiego game, EA wisely decided to skip a bunch of PC sequels (Where in the USA, Where in Europe and the oddly niche Where in North Dakota) and jump straight to the fifth game in the series, which focused on time travel. This time Carmen and her goons have stolen a time machine and are travelling through history, swiping as many priceless artefacts as they can. Jumping into your Chronoskimmer 325i, you have to follow them. The general game mechanics work the same way here as they did in the previous games, only now you not only have to figure out which country to visit next, but which time period too. Some copies were bundled with an encyclopedia to help with this. ■

FACT

In 2019, Google launched Where on Google Earth is Carmen Sandiego, a new version of the game designed to be played for free on web browsers.

WHIP RUSH

Year 1990
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Vic Tokai

IT IS THE year 2222. The people of Earth are so greedy that they've drained the resources of every planet in the solar system. A team of three robot spaceships was sent to the next system to mine new sources, and after years of silence the three ships returned. Joined together into a massive flying fortress, repurposed by aliens to take over the Earth. All the planet's remaining resources are brought together to build their last chance of survival: a fighter ship called Whip Rush. The game is a typical side-scrolling shoot 'em up for the most part, though at times the screen will scroll vertically or even backwards, meaning you have to rotate your Power Claws accordingly (small support ships that also fire bullets). ■

FACT

According to the title screen the game's full title is Whip Rush: 2222AD – The Invasion of the Voltegians, which would have given the poor person laying out this book a heart murmur.

WILLIAMS ARCADE'S GREATEST HITS

Year 1996
Publisher Williams Entertainment / THQ
Developer Digital Eclipse Software

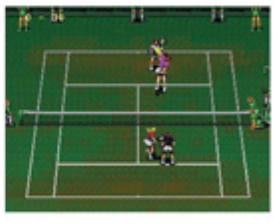
REMEMBER THE GOOD old days, when gaming was simpler? 'Isn't that what this book is about?', I hear you ask. Maybe so, but Williams Arcade's Greatest Hits features a collection of games that were considered the good old days during the good old days I'm talking about. If that makes sense. There are five vintage arcade games to choose from here: Defender, Defender II (or Stargate as it was also known), Joust, Robotron 2084 and Sinistar. Each game is recreated surprisingly accurately by retro specialist Digital Eclipse, and Defender II and Robotron 2084 even have support for six-button controllers, to cope with the various ship actions and the twin-stick shooting respectively. If you'd rather, you can plug in a second controller for Robotron and use two D-Pads to emulate twin sticks. ■

FACT

If you're looking for the game in Europe but can't find it, that'll be because the name was changed to Midway Presents Arcade's Greatest Hits.

WIMBLEDON CHAMPIONSHIP TENNIS

Year 1993
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer SIMS



SEGA'S FIRST ATTEMPT at a tennis game included the official licence for the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club at Wimbledon and the corresponding tournament (there's no croquet to be seen though, so don't get too excited). What it doesn't have, however, is any real players, so the 24 tennis pros you'll find in here – 12 men and 12 women – are entirely fictional: Hines, Mauser, Ekberg and the like. As well as the typical exhibition mode (where you can play singles or doubles matches), there's also a tournament mode where your player starts off with low stats, enters the Wimbledon tournament at the quarter final stage, and then levels up for future tournaments if they win the whole thing. ■

FACT

The first Wimbledon tournament took place in 1877. At the time of writing, Martina Navratilova and Roger Federer have won it more times than any other woman or man: nine and eight, respectively.

WINTER CHALLENGE

Year 1992
Publisher Ballistic
Developer MindSpan Technologies

BEFORE ACCOLADE (UNDER its Ballistic branding) decided to release its own unofficial Summer Olympics game in the shape of Summer Challenge, it first did the same with the Winter Olympics. Winter Challenge – which, again has no official IOC licensing to speak of – consists of eight different chilly disciplines to take part in, either as single events or in a tournament: the Luge, Downhill Skiing, Cross-Country Skiing, Bobsled, Speed Skating, Giant Slalom, Biathlon and Ski Jump. Like its summer successor, all eight events take place in a third-person view over the athlete's shoulder, and there's no button-bashing to be found: even the Speed Skating event relies more on rhythm than exertion. Which is a lesson to live your life by. ■

FACT

The actual Winter Olympics in 1992 were held in Albertville, France. Germany came top of the medal table with 26 medals, closely followed by the Unified Team with 23.

WINTER OLYMPICS: LILLEHAMMER '94

Year 1994
Publisher US Gold
Developer Tiertex

AFTER ITS BARCELONA '92 Summer Olympics game sold relatively well, US Gold retained the Olympic licence for this game based on the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway. There are ten different events here, with a heavy emphasis on skiing for the most part: Downhill, Giant Slalom, Super G, Slalom, Bobsled, Luge, Freestyle Moguls, Ski Jumping, Biathlon and Short Track Speed Skating. Players can choose to either practice an event, play through all 10 events in order or put together a 'Mini Olympics' where they choose which of the events to take part in (just in case the thought of the Slalom mortally offends them). The Mega Drive and SNES versions were handled by different developers: the general consensus is that the latter is more difficult. ■

FACT

If you're wondering why there was another Winter Olympics two years after the 1992 one, this was when the IOC decided the Summer and Winter games should be two years apart. After this tweak, it was every four years from that point.

WIZ 'N LIZ

Year 1993
Publisher Psygnosis
Developer Raising Hell Productions

WIZ AND LIZ are a pair of wizards who have to round up a bunch of 'wabbits' who have gone missing. Each of the game's 56 levels involves running around catching wabbits and collecting the letters they drop until you spell a certain word, at which point the number of wabbits becomes finite and you can collect them all to unlock the door to the next stage. Along the way Wiz and Liz can also collect various fruit and vegetables: there are 14 types of these and two can be combined in a cauldron for a special reward. This could be something straightforward (an extended time limit, doubling your score) or something more bizarre (like one of a variety of mini-games or a cameo appearance by some Lemmings). ■

FACT

Combine a potato and a cabbage and you'll get an instant Game Over. The game will then say it was only joking and play will resume.

WOLFCHILD

Year 1992
Publisher JVC
Developer Core Design

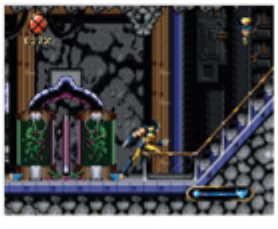
WHEN SAUL MORROW returns home from a research expedition at sea to discover that his father – renowned biogenetics expert Dr Kal Morrow – has been kidnapped by a notorious terrorist group called Chimera, to say he's a tad peeved would be an understatement. Saul reluctantly decides to activate his dad's experimental Wolfchild project, transforming him into a half man, half wolf hybrid. Time to get all howly and stuff. Wolfchild is an action platformer consisting of nine levels, where Saul has to infiltrate Chimera's base and take out their leader Karl Dra. At first Saul can only jump and punch, but when he collects extra health he turns into a werewolf (obviously) and can then shoot fire at enemies. ■

FACT

Wolfchild is a rare example of a game that launched on the Mega CD first and was then ported to the Mega Drive, rather than the other way around.

WOLVERINE: ADAMANTIUM RAGE

Year 1994
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Teeny Weeny Games



YOU'VE GOT TO feel for Wolverine. He's got no idea what his past is, and he's pretty sure that some of his memories were artificially implanted. When he gets an anonymous message on his computer terminal along with 'a disturbing photograph', he heads off to the Weapon X laboratory to see if he can find some answers there. Wolvie's adventures take him through seven locations: the aforementioned lab, the snowy wastelands of Dead Man's Land, the Canadian forests, a nightmare hallucinogenic world, the Inner Circle, an underground dungeon and finally the sewers beneath New York. Wolverine has a wide range of combat moves and can slowly heal himself after taking damage, but the game was criticised for being sluggish and clunky to play despite this. ■

FACT

When you beat the game, Professor X says 'Well done Wolverine' while Cyclops and Gambit hoist him up on their shoulders. So much for him finding out about his past.

WONDER BOY III: MONSTER LAIR

Year 1990
Publisher Sega
Developer Aicom

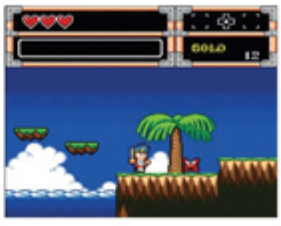
ALTHOUGH MOST SEGA fans regard the Master System game Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap to be the third game in the Wonder Boy series, in reality Monster Lair came to arcades first and is the proper Wonder Boy III. It does make sense in a way, when you consider that it plays a lot more like the first two Wonder Boy games in that it's a linear action platformer where the player travels from left to right, rather than a deeper adventure with backtracking and transformations. The game follows a chap called Leo and his 'bosom friend' Priscilla as they make their way through nine levels. A second player can join in to play as Priscilla in a co-op fashion. ■

FACT

There are eight games in the Wonder Boy series in total. If you want to try to put them in order you're a braver soul than me.

WONDER BOY IN MONSTER WORLD

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Westone



IT MAY BE difficult to figure out which is the third game Wonder Boy game but there's no denying which one is the fifth: Wonder Boy in Monster World has you playing as a young lad called Shion as he tries to save Monster World from an invasion of monsters. Which, to be fair, was always likely to happen when you give your land a name like that. Rather than the linear platforming action seen in some Wonder Boy games, Monster World plays more like the Master System game Wonder Boy in Monster Land, where it's more of an RPG-platformer hybrid and the player can backtrack if they need to. Shion can also collect magic which helps him trigger earthquakes, fire storms, thunder and the like. ■

FACT

The game got a bunch of different ports. As well as the Brazilian rebranding (seen earlier), it also got a simplified Master System version and a tweaked TurboDuo version called The Dynastic Hero.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SOCCER II

Year 1994
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer Sensible Software

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SOCCER was the North American name for World Cup Italia 90, but this sequel had very little to do with that title, other than the fact that Sega was publishing them both. Instead, World Championship Soccer II was developed by a mysterious unknown team simply referred to as The Mystery Chefs in the manual. In reality, The Mystery Chefs were none other than Sensible Software, the studio behind the incredible Sensible Soccer games, trying out something completely different for Sega. It's almost like the completely opposite game: unlike Sensible Soccer's trademark top-down view and tiny players, this one was side-scrolling with enormous sprites. And yet the pass, ball movement and diving header actions are all unmistakably Sensible-style once you know to look out for them. ■

FACT

Despite keeping Sensible's involvement a secret, the game's box has no problem boasting that it was 'programmed in the UK' and 'designed in Europe, where soccer is king'.

WORLD CLASS LEADER BOARD

Year 1992
Publisher US Gold
Developer Access Software / Tiertex

THE ORIGINAL LEADER Board was a golf game released on home computers in 1986. After a couple of sequels the final game, World Class Leader Board, was met with much praise, before coming to the Mega Drive a few years later. There are three real-life courses to play through here – Doral Country Club in Florida, Cypress Creek in Texas, St Andrews in Scotland and an extra tough, fictional course called the Gauntlet Links – and players have 12 different types of competition they can take part in, such as Skins, Best Ball or Texas Scramble. While the main display is somewhat basic, there's an impressive overhead view on the side of the screen that zooms in and out in a smooth 3D manner. ■

FACT

Leader Board was created by brothers Bruce and Roger Carver, and evolved into Microsoft's Links series. The pair sold the series to Microsoft and founded TruGolf, makers of those big $20,000 simulators you see in rich people's homes.

WORLD CUP ITALIA '90

Year	1989
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega

ONE OF THE first football games released for the Mega Drive, World Cup Italia '90 is also one of the most well-known among football-loving Sega fans because of the sheer number of compilations it was included in (head back to the Mega Games section to see what I mean). The game itself has an overhead viewpoint and gives the player three kick types: ground pass, lob and shoot. The AI is fairly weak so with a bit of practice you can zig-zag lobs right up the pitch and head it past the keeper with ease. There are 24 international teams to choose from, but not every team here actually qualified for Italia '90, presumably because the final list of teams hadn't been decided when it launched in Japan. ■

FACT

World Cup Italia '90s has had a bunch of different names. In North America it's World Championship Soccer, in Japan it's World Cup Soccer and in Europe, after the Italia '90s licence was dropped it simply became Sega Soccer.

WORLD CUP USA 94

Year	1994
Publisher	US Gold
Developer	Tiertex

WHEN US GOLD gets an official sporting licence, it doesn't mess about. That's why, armed with the official licence for the 1994 USA World Cup, it proceeded to release games for no fewer than eight different systems. The Mega Drive version is similar to the SNES one in that it offers an overhead viewpoint similar to games like Sensible Soccer. All 24 international teams who qualified for the tournament can be found here – although none of them have real player names – and there's even a proper World Cup mode where you play the actual 1994 tournament with the correct groups and fixtures (in case you fancy trying to recreate Ireland's shock victory over Italy). You can also make custom tournaments should you prefer to mix things up a bit. ■

FACT

For those youngsters who don't remember it (especially because neither England nor Scotland qualified for it), the 1994 World Cup was won by Brazil, who beat Italy on penalties after Roberto Baggio famously missed one.

WORLD HEROES

Year	1994
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega Midwest Studio

ANOTHER FIGHTING GAME courtesy of one-on-one experts SNK, World Heroes was first released on its Neo-Geo arcade and console hardware in 1992 before Sega's Midwest Studio stepped in to handle the Genesis port. The gimmick here is that the game's eight playable heroes have all been brought together by Dr Fracas, a scientist with a time machine who wants to know who would win a tournament of the greatest fighters in history. The roster, therefore, includes the likes of Japanese ninja Hanzou Hattori, Russian madman Rasputin and fake versions of Hulk Hogan, Bruce Lee, Joan of Arc and Genghis Khan. Fights can either take part in normal stages or Death Matches, where the edges of the screen contain spikes, electricity or what have you. ■

FACT

Sega Midwest Studio developed World Heroes and NHL All-Star Hockey 95, and was working on a pair of 32X games until the studio was closed and the staff were moved to other departments.

WORLD OF ILLUSION STARRING MICKEY MOUSE AND DONALD DUCK

Year	1992
Publisher	Sega
Developer	Sega

FOLLOWING THE OVERWHELMING success of Castle of Illusion, Sega decided to bring Mickey Mouse back for this sequel a couple of years later, and this time it brought Donald Duck along for the ride. While rehearsing at a theatre for a magic show, Mickey and Donald find a magic box, but they're sucked into it and taken to the World of Magic, where they have to find the Magic Master by getting through five stages – an enchanted forest, the clouds, underwater, a library and the Magic Master's home – and taking him on in a duel. Solo players can choose to play as Mickey or Donald but the game really comes into its own in two-player co-op, where stages are modified to encourage teamwork. ■

FACT

There are actually three sets of levels: playing as Mickey, Donald or both together gives you a different series of stages, meaning all three playthroughs are somewhat different.

WORLD SERIES BASEBALL

Year 1994
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer BlueSky Software

BY THIS POINT in the book you've probably realised that the vast majority of Genesis baseball games came in three flavours: real team names, real player names or neither. World Series Baseball was a rare outlier in that everything was real, with Sega acquiring both the MLB and MLBPA licences. The game offers a 13, 26, 52 or full 162 game league, with a battery back-up saving your game, and also includes batting practice and a home run derby mode. The rather unique viewpoint goes with what Sega calls the 'In the Batter's Box View', which essentially sits the camera right behind home plate. This makes it a lot easier to track the pitch and determine whether it'll be a ball or a strike before swinging. ■

FACT

Although there's no reference to it, World Series Baseball is essentially a spiritual successor to Sports Talk Baseball, given that Lon Simmons' commentary is in here too, with real team names obviously added.

WORLD SERIES BASEBALL '95

Year 1995
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer BlueSky Software

THE FIRST WORLD Series Baseball was met with plenty of critical praise, but Sega was just getting started. The following year this update was released, with a bunch of new features. Joining the real team and player names this time were all 28 real stadiums, fully recreated in pixel form, including the three newest ones: the Cleveland Indians' Progressive Field, the Colorado Rockies' Coors Field and the Texas Rangers' Globe Life Park. Drafting and trading options were added, as were a pair of American and National League All-Time teams, starring the likes of Lou Gehrig and Cy Young. Multiple players could now take part in a season together and players could now just play the playoffs instead of a league season if they wanted to. ■

FACT

During the very first game at Globe Life Park, a fan fell off a railing and fell 35 feet, fracturing numerous bones. The Rangers moved to a new stadium in 2020 but the Covid pandemic delayed its opening.

WORLD SERIES BASEBALL '96

Year 1996
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer BlueSky Software

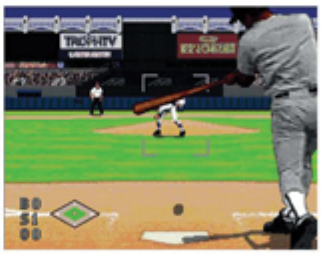
IT WOULD APPEAR that Sega and BlueSky had really gone all out with World Series Baseball '95, because the 1996 edition released the following year didn't really offer much in the way of new features. Obviously the expected changes were the updated rosters and stats – which now reflected the 1995 MLB season – and the new league schedule from the 1996 season. Other than that, though, there wasn't much to write home about. A new 104-game season mode was added, for the approximately three people who felt 13, 26 or 52 wasn't enough but the full 162 was too much. Other than that, though, the majority of the game was near-identical to the '95 version: even the main menu looked pretty much the same. ■

FACT

When you start the '95 version the Sega logo appears, and is then smashed by a batter, revealing the Sega Sports logo. Sure enough, the '96 version has exactly the same animation.

WORLD SERIES BASEBALL '98

Year 1997
Publisher Sega Sports
Developer BlueSky Software



AS SEGA WAS releasing the yearly-numbered World Series Baseball series on the Genesis, it was also making a separate World Series Baseball series for the Saturn with numbered entries: the first in 1995, then World Series Baseball II in 1996. When World Series Baseball '98 launched on both consoles, then, Sega impressively managed to mess up both their numbering systems at the same time. By this point, like its predecessor, the '98 version made no real changes at all beyond the typical updated rosters and new 1997 league schedule. Same menu, same intro animation, essentially the same game with a data update. And no, the back of the box wasn't fooling anyone by attempting to list the same old modes under a New Features list. ■

FACT

The series returned in 2000 with three more games. World Series Baseball 2K1 was a Dreamcast exclusive, while 2K2 was on the Xbox as well and 2K3 was on just the Xbox and PS2.

WORLD TROPHY SOCCER

Year 1992
Publisher Virgin Games
Developer Krisalis Software

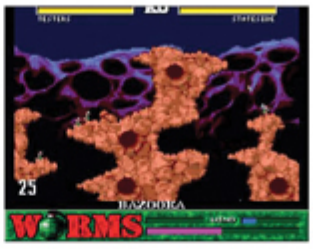
WHILE VIRGIN AND Krisalis were making European Club Soccer for the Mega Drive, it was clear that such a game would never sell well in North America (since European football was nowhere near as popular in that region as it is now, with practically no TV coverage to speak of). Rather than decide to keep it as a European exclusive, then, it was decided to repurpose the game for North America as World Trophy Soccer. All 170 European club teams were removed, and were instead replaced by 32 national teams. The game's box may have its tongue in its cheek a little: after listing eight different features on the back, it ends with: 'And most importantly, the ability to alter the colour of any teams' uniforms.' ■

FACT

Get ready for confusion. World Trophy Soccer was also the name of a 1988 home computer football game, which was then renamed World Cup Italia '90 after the publisher was bought by… Virgin.

WORMS

Year 1995
Publisher Ocean Software
Developer Team17



WORMS WASN'T THE first game of its type – the likes of 1991 tank game Scorched Earth came before it – but it was certainly the first to introduce its specific subgenre to the masses and make it popular. It's a turn-based, team-based combat game, but whereas most games of that ilk take place on an overheard grid with battles carried out through menus (Fire Emblem style), here the action is from a side-on view and all combat is directly player-controlled. Up to four teams of four Worms are present on the battlefield, and take turns firing weapons at each other. Players have to set the aim direction and power of most weapons, and wind often comes into play too, so half the challenge is in even hitting your opponent in the first place. ■

FACT

There have been more than 25 Worms games and spin-offs released at the time of writing, including the puzzle game Worms Blast and Worms Golf, which is about… well, I'll let you guess.

WRESTLE WAR

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

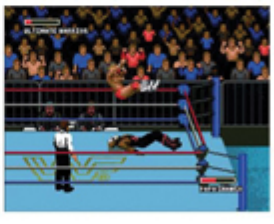
THIS INTERESTING BUT basic wrestling game started life as a Sega-developed arcade release in 1989 before being ported to the Mega Drive in 1991 and released in Japan and Europe. North America didn't get it despite wrestling's huge popularity there, perhaps because Sega feared legal action from the WWF due to the fact that many of your opponents look suspiciously like some of its stars, like Hulk Hogan and the Legion of Doom (aka the Road Warriors). Playing as Bruce Blade – the very definition of what Stone Cold Steve Austin would call a 'white meat babyface' – you have to defeat six other opponents and win the SWF and SWA titles, before unlocking bonus matches with a pair who look suspiciously like Stan Hansen and Abdullah the Butcher. ■

FACT

The Japanese cover used a barely modified illustration of Hulk Hogan, with his bandana saying 'Titan Hogan' instead. The head was completely changed for the European release.

WWF SUPER WRESTLEMANIA

Year 1992
Publisher Flying Edge
Developer Sculptured Software



FORGIVE ME FOR messing with alphabetical order for a while, but this batch of WWF games would be really hard to explain if features kept being removed each time. Super Wrestlemania was the first of Acclaim's wrestling games on the Mega Drive (under its Flying Edge label), and was based on the SNES game of the same name. Despite this, the Mega Drive version had some differences, the most notable being a modified roster: the Ultimate Warrior, Papa Shango, IRS, the British Bulldog and Shawn Michaels were exclusive to the Mega Drive version, joining Hulk Hogan, Macho Man Randy Savage and Ted DiBiase for a total of eight. The Mega Drive version also had a special move for each character, rather than a standard moveset for everyone. ■

FACT

The Undertaker remained exclusive to the SNES version, making the Mega Drive game one of just a couple of WWF/WWE titles not to feature him since he debuted in 1990.

WWF ROYAL RUMBLE

Year 1993
Publisher Flying Edge
Developer Sculptured Software

THE SECOND ACCLAIM WWF game improved on the original in numerous ways. The roster was increased from eight to 12: this time the Mega Drive exclusives were Hulk Hogan, IRS, Hacksaw Jim Duggan, The Model Rick Martel and Papa Shango, who joined Bret Hart, the Undertaker, Shawn Michaels, Razor Ramon, Randy Savage, Crush and Lex Luger. Steel chairs were added, as was the brilliant ability to knock out the referee then choke your opponent and gouge their eyes as he lay unconscious in the ring. The biggest addition, though, was the titular Royal Rumble mode, where all 12 wrestlers compete (with a maximum of six in the ring at once) and are eliminated when they're thrown over the top rope and out of the ring. ■

FACT

The winners of the two previous Royal Rumbles before the game launched (1992 and 1993) were Ric Flair and Yokozuna, neither of whom are in the game.

WWF RAW

Year 1994
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Sculptured Software

THE THIRD AND final Mega Drive WWF game to use the Super WrestleMania engine, WWF Raw once again stood on the shoulders of its predecessor by adding more features. The revamped 12-strong roster included Bret Hart, the Undertaker, Yokozuna, Bam Bam Bigelow, Razor Ramon, Lex Luger, Doink, Shawn Michaels, Diesel, Owen Hart, the 1-2-3 Kid and Luna Vachon (the latter being the first playable woman in a WWF game). As well as an improved move set, there were also new outside weapons like buckets and the ring bell. Players could now also activate 'Mega Moves', over-the-top moves that did huge damage. Each wrestler had their own Mega Move: Doink could perform a 'field goal kick', Diesel could 'caber toss' opponents into the sky, Yokozuna could cannonball off the turnbuckle and so on. ■

FACT

The Game Gear version of WWF Raw included Macho Man Randy Savage as an exclusive character. This would be his last appearance in a WWF/WWE game until WWE All Stars in 2011.

WWF WRESTLEMANIA: THE ARCADE GAME

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Sculptured Software

MIDWAY RELEASED THIS arcade game in 1995 but Acclaim still owned the rights to produce home WWF games, so handled the console ports. Much like other Midway games like Mortal Kombat and NBA Jam, this arcade wrestling title used actual digitised footage of WWF superstars instead of hand-drawn sprites. There are only eight wrestlers to choose from – Bret Hart, the Undertaker, Shawn Michaels, Razor Ramon, Doink, Lex Luger, Bam Bam Bigelow and Yokozuna – but each has a wildly different series of over-the-top moves designed to fit their characters: the Undertaker shoots ghosts and hits opponents with a tombstone, for example, while Doink the Clown attacks with a giant mallet and an electric hand buzzer. Also, hitting Yokozuna makes him spit out fish and sushi, which is… hmm. ■

FACT

This is one situation where the Mega Drive version is much better than the SNES one: it had all eight characters (versus six on the SNES) and could support four wrestlers on-screen (versus three).

X-MEN

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Western Technologies

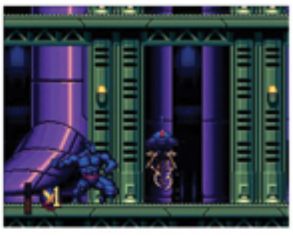
WHEN THE X-MEN aren't out saving the day, they're usually practicing on the computer simulated combat zones in their Danger Room so they're prepared for the next time such a need occurs. The mischievous Magneto knows this, so he's come up with the perfect plan: infect the Danger Room's computer with a deadly virus, and I mean an actual deadly one, so the X-Men will have to actually fight for their lives or face certain, real doom. There are four heroes to choose from, each with their own abilities: Gambit can throw exploding cards, Nightcrawler can teleport, Wolverine has his trademark claws and Cyclops can blast enemies with his optic blast. You can also call on Rogue, Archangel, Iceman, Storm or Jean Gray to help out, and there's a two-player co-op mode too. ■

FACT

At one point you find a computer terminal and the message 'reset the computer' appears. This stumped many players, who didn't realise you actually have to reset your Mega Drive console to continue.

X-MEN 2: CLONE WARS

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Headgames / Zono



ANOTHER VIRUS IS threatening the safety of the world but this time Magneto has nothing to do with it. It's called the Phalanx, and is an alien that can take over human minds. Because mutants like the X-Men aren't affected, the Phalanx has also created robot clones of each of them, and instructed them to kill off their source material. Players can initially choose between six characters this time – Beast, Cyclops, Gambit, Nightcrawler, Psylocke and Wolverine – and things get really interesting when Magneto, realising he has to work together with the X-Men to stop this greater evil, joins as a seventh playable character later on. As before, each character has their own special abilities, but this time these abilities aren't limited and can be used as often as needed. ■

FACT

X-Men 2 is the only Mega Drive game that doesn't open with any logos. The second you turn your console on you get a prologue stage which must be completed before the Sega logo appears.

X-PERTS

Year 1996
Publisher Sega
Developer Abalone Entertainment

AS ONE OF the last 'big' Sega releases on the Genesis you'd have hoped X-Perts would have helped the system go out with a bang, but that didn't quite turn out to be the case. The game is a spin-off of Eternal Champions and stars its assassin character Shadow Yamoto as a member of the X-Perts, a trio of top secret counter-terrorist experts, who've been tasked with regaining control of an undersea weapons facility from a group of terrorists. The player controls Shadow and her colleagues – tech expert Zackary Taylor and robotics doctor Tashile Claudel – but they're all located at different parts of the facility, so the idea is to switch between them. X-Perts was heavily criticised for its clunky animations and poor controls. ■

FACT

The game's box mistakenly claimed that it had a battery back-up save function, when it didn't. Later versions had a Deep Water sticker placed over it (see Eternal Champions in the Mega CD section).

XENON 2: MEGABLAST

Year 1992
Publisher Virgin Games
Developer The Bitmap Brothers

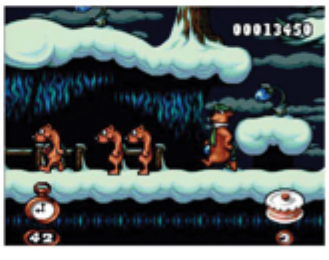
THE ORIGINAL XENON was the first game ever developed by cult British development studio The Bitmap Brothers. After going on to release Speedball, the team decided to return to the world of Xenon for a sequel. In this vertical-scrolling shoot 'em up you have to defuse four time bombs – each of which is being guarded by a large boss – before an alien race called the Xenites blow up the universe. Although it's a straightforward shooter for the most part, it does have one fairly unique feature: the ability to scroll the screen back downwards for a few seconds, if you either need extra space or have gone down the wrong path at one of the game's occasional forks. ■

FACT

The subtitle refers to Megablast (Hip Hop on Precinct 13), the game's fantastic theme song by UK electronic music artist Bomb the Bass. Give it a listen on YouTube, you won't regret it.

YOGI BEAR: CARTOON CAPERS

Year 1994
Publisher GameTek
Developer Empire Interactive



THIS PLATFORM GAME based on everyone's favourite tie-wearing bear was released in both North America and Europe for the SNES, but the Mega Drive version was a Europe-only affair. Yogi is woken up from his winter hibernation to discover that Jellystone Park is to become the home to a new chemical plant. Since this is unlikely to have a positive impact on the place (and since it'll probably lead to fewer visitors, meaning fewer picnic baskets for him to steal), Yogi decides to travel across the park to find Ranger Smith and let him know what's going on. There are 20 stages to play through and most of them are run-of-the-mill platforming fare, though there's also the obligatory minecart section and the somewhat less obligatory beaver-surfing section. ■

FACT

Yogi Bear first appeared in 1958 as a supporting character in *The Huckleberry Hound Show*, but he became more popular than Huckleberry Hound and eventually got his own show.

YS III: WANDERERS FROM YS

Year 1991
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Riot

THE FIRST GAMES in the Ys series only appeared on the Sega Master System and TurboGrafx-CD respectively in the west, so it was unrealistic to expect players to be up to speed with the plot for this third entry. While Ys III does star Adol, the hero from the first two games, it's something of a standalone story: he and his friend Dogi visit Dogi's old hometown of Sarina after hearing that it's being terrorised by monsters. Sure enough, evil goings are underfoot so a spot of day-saving is in order. Ys III is considered the Zelda II of the series in that it's something of a black sheep: while the previous games used a top-down viewpoint for combat, this time the action is side-scrolling. ■

FACT

If you pronounce it as 'whys', you're committing a mortal sin. According to the official stance on the matter, it's pronounced like 'geese' without the G.

YU YU HAKUSHO: SUNSET FIGHTERS

Year 1999
Publisher TecToy
Developer Treasure

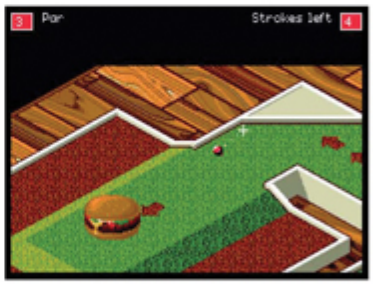
WHILE TREASURE IS generally known for its shoot 'em ups and platformers, it's been known to dabble with fighting games on occasion too. The first of these was based on manga and anime series Yu Yu Hakusho and launched on the Mega Drive in Japan in 1994, where it remained for five years until Sega's Brazilian distributor TecToy localised and released it in Brazil. There are eleven characters to choose from, and during combat players can jump between two planes as in SNK's Fatal Fury games. While the standard single-player mode is your typical arcade style situation where you beat a series of opponents, you can also choose battle royale or tag matches for up to four players, where all four characters fight on-screen at the same time. ■

FACT

The Yu Yu Hakusho manga consists of 19 volumes and 175 chapters in total, while the '90s anime series has 112 episodes, so have fun with that.

ZANY GOLF

Year 1990
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Sandcastle Productions



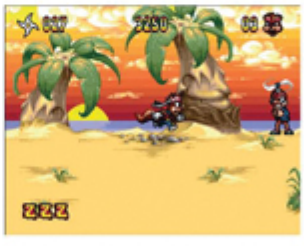
THIS CHARMING TAKE on miniature golf (or crazy golf as it's better known in the UK) consists of nine holes, each with their own fun gimmick. While the first hole is a windmill – a staple of any good mini-golf course – the game soon introduces more obstacles that simply wouldn't be expected on a real-life course, such as a bouncing hamburger guarding the hole, a pinball section where you hit the ball with flippers or even a giant Breakout-style table where you move a bat and break blocks with the ball. There are nine holes in total and the game can be played by up to four players, but to make sure it doesn't go on forever players are limited to just five strokes on each hole. ■

FACT

The home computer versions had an extra hole called Magic Carpet where the ball could be hit over a 'magic' surface that let you control it directly with the mouse. It was removed for the Mega Drive.

ZERO THE KAMIKAZE SQUIRREL

Year 1994
Publisher Sunsoft
Developer Iguana Entertainment



ZERO IS BASICALLY the Knuckles of the Aero the Acro-Bat series. While initially appearing as a henchman for the main bad guy, he eventually becomes a hero and stars in his own adventure. In this spin-off, Zero discovers that his home forest is due to be deforested and turned to pulp so the evil Jacques le Sheets (who's also kidnapped the father of Zero's girlfriend Amy) can make fake money with it. Zero now has to make his way through seven levels to reach le Sheets' factory and put a stop to this madness. As far as action platformers go, Zero's got an impressive set of attacks, such as throwing stars, nunchuks, forward flips, swooping attacks, a mid-air slam and so on. ■

FACT

Aero and Zero's creator David Siller left Sunsoft in the mid '90s to join Universal. In 2015 he claimed that he was the main designer of Crash Bandicoot but Naughty Dog's co-founders gave him no credit for it.

ZERO TOLERANCE

Year 1994
Publisher Accolade
Developer Technopop

THIS VISUALLY IMPRESSIVE game manages to pull off what few others did and deliver a competent first-person shooter on the Mega Drive. Zero Tolerance lets you choose between five different characters – each with their own starting equipment – as you make your way through a series of maze-like stages with one simple goal: kill all the enemies to progress to the next level. There are a wide range of items to collect, but you can only hold five at once. Interestingly, weapons count as items too, so while you can pick up the likes of pistols, shotguns, flamethrowers and rocket launchers, you'll need to make sure you still have space for, say, night vision goggles, a flashlight or flame-retardant clothing when the situation requires them. ■

FACT

Zero Tolerance also impressively has a co-op mode which involves two consoles, two TVs, two copies of the game and a special link cable players could buy directly from Accolade.

ZERO WING

Year 1991
Publisher Sega
Developer Toaplan

THERE'S A GOOD chance that you may never have played (or maybe even heard of) Zero Wing, and yet are familiar with its intro. The European Mega Drive release of this Toaplan shoot 'em up was atrociously translated, leading to the intro sequence stating the immortal line: 'All your base are belong to us'. The game itself is more than just some laughably bad localisation, though: not only is it a solid enough shoot 'em up as is usually the case with Toaplan arcade ports, it has an interesting capture beam weapon which lets players suck up small enemies, keep them attached to the front of their ship, then fire them at other enemies to do extra damage when the need arises. ■

FACT

North American gamers finally got a chance to own a Genesis Zero Wing cart when publisher Retro-Bit released it in 2020 as a Toaplan Shooters Collector's Edition along with Truxton, Hellfire and Fire Shark.

ZOMBIES ATE MY NEIGHBOURS

Year 1993
Publisher Konami
Developer LucasArts

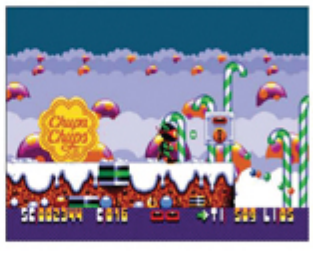
THIS HUMOROUS TRIBUTE to horror B-movies was simply titled Zombies in Europe, because heaven forbid anyone should find out what zombies actually do. Zeke and Julie are a pair of brave teenagers who have to save their innocent neighbours from an invasion of monsters: not just the titular zombies but also the likes of vampires, mummies, chainsaw-wielding maniacs and even Tommy, an evil doll who definitely isn't supposed to be Chucky, honest. While the pair are initially armed with a squirt gun, they can also collect more powerful weapons like soda pop grenades, a fire extinguisher, a bazooka (wow, that escalated quickly) and even kitchen silverware, which may not seem like much but is perfect for killing the occasional werewolves you'll see on your travels. ■

FACT

Zombies Ate My Neighbours received a sequel called Ghoul Patrol, but it was only released on the SNES. It wasn't quite as entertaining, so don't worry about the old FOMO.

ZOOL

Year 1993
Publisher GameTek / Electronic Arts
Developer Gremlin Graphics



IF YOU EVER try to claim that Zool is an ant, you're being extremely foolish: he's a ninja from the Nth dimension, and don't you forget it. When his ship crash-lands on an alien planet, Zool discovers that the evil Krool has infiltrated its various worlds – Sweet, Music, Fruit, Tool, Toy, Fairground and Desert Island – and turned the ordinary inanimate objects that inhibit it into deadly assassins, all out to kill Zool. The aim, then, is to make your way through each world using Zool's ninja powers to shoot bullets, climb walls and performing jumping spin attacks. The game was most famous for two things: its extremely high speed, and the appearance of Chupa Chups lollipop branding in the first world. ■

FACT

According to the back of the North American version's box, the Nth dimension is 'your imagination'. It's not clear whether this is canon or a marketing person pulling it out of their own Nth dimension.

ZOOM!

Year 1989
Publisher Sega
Developer Cyclone System

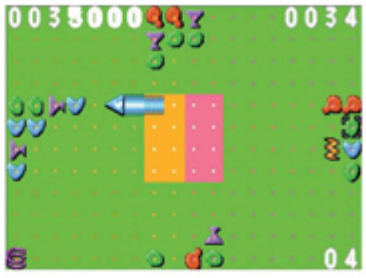
MR SMART HAS a problem. A group of cute but dangerous Space Phantoms have set up a bunch of magical force fields around the Earth, and someone has to remove them. Thankfully, the solution is clear. Playing as Mr Smart (or two Mr Smarts in two-player co-op), you have to skate around the grid, colouring in the lines as you go. When all four lines of a square are coloured in, the square is 'captured' and lights up. When the entire grid is lit, the stage is cleared and you move onto the next one (there are 36 in total). Mr Smart can throw rubber balls behind him to stun enemies: it looks suspiciously like he's pooping them out but let's not get crude here. ■

FACT

The manual gives advice from 'experienced Sega game counsellors', including the tip: 'Always remember, Zoom!'s middle name is Patience!' Which then asks the question of what its surname is.

ZOOP

Year 1995
Publisher Viacom New Media
Developer Hookstone / PanelComp



THIS DECEPTIVELY SIMPLE puzzle game claims on its packaging that you won't be able to stop playing it, and to its credit it certainly does have that 'one more time' factor. A series of coloured blobs are slowly approaching your base from four different directions, and your only way of defending yourself is to fire a coloured arrow at them. If the arrow hits a blob of the same colour it'll disappear, but if it hits a blob of a different colour the two will swap over and you'll now be firing that new colour (for example, shoot purple at a yellow blob and the blob will turn purple while you can now shoot yellow). Like the best puzzlers, it can be learned in seconds but will take hours to master. ■

FACT

Zoop was released on no fewer than nine systems, ranging from 'how does a game about colours work on this' (Game Boy) to 'this isn't really pushing the system to its limits' (Saturn).

MODERN RELEASES

Year Various
Publisher Various
Developer Various

ASSUMING YOU'VE BEEN reading cover-to-cover, you've just read about every Mega Drive and Genesis game that was released in Europe, North and South America and Australia during the natural lifetime of the console. It's been at least a couple of decades since then, though, and some are still trying to keep Sega's 16-bit wonder alive by continuing to make and release new games for it. Some of these are re-releases of older games, such as iam8bit's 2020 re-release of Aladdin or Retro-Bit's Toaplan Shooters Collector's Edition series (see Zero Wing). Others are official translations of games that were previously released in other regions: California-based Super Fighter Team has previously done this with Taiwanese games like Beggar Prince, Legend of Wukong and Blue Almanac (renamed Star Odyssey for the new 2011 release). Perhaps most interesting, however, are the completely new games released for the console, such as the criticially acclaimed 2010 RPG Pier Solar and the Great Architects, Bitmap Bureau's 2019 twin-stick shooter Xeno Crisis, Big Evil Corporation's 2018 platformer Tanglewood and the various games developed by Mega Cat Studios such as beat 'em up Coffee Crisis and top-down RPG shooter Lethal Wedding. Piko Interactive is another notable studio: at the time of writing it's released 10 new physical Mega Drive games, and even teamed up with old religious game publisher Wisdom Tree to not only re-release its old games in a compilation cart, but also port SNES game Super 3D Noah's Ark to the Mega Drive for the first time. ■

FACT

While most of these games should work on most versions of the original Mega Drive or Genesis hardware, some of them (especially compilation carts) may not work on clone consoles like Hyperkin's Retron series.

BONUS SECTION 1

THE MEGA CD / SEGA CD ENCYCLOPEDIA

Anyone who bought a Mega Drive before the end of 1991 may have been curious about the odd removable cover on the right-hand underside of the console which, when slid open, simply revealed a red bit of plastic with the words 'do not remove' written on it. This was the console's expansion port, and it was originally designed to be used with a floppy disk drive that was mentioned during the lead-up to the console's launch but ultimately never released. That wasn't the only plan Sega had for the port, however, as eventually became clear when the company dramatically announced it was embracing compact discs.

CD-ROM technology was still a very new phenomenon in the early '90s. It wasn't until the 'multimedia CD-ROM' craze took off (most notably when Windows 95 launched) that the format started seeing mainstream, widespread use. As such, while the thought of releasing a CD-ROM expansion for the Mega Drive wasn't an entirely original one – NEC had already done it with the TurboGrafx-CD – given the popularity of the console it was certainly one of the first times the tech was being made properly available to the masses.

Despite this, there was a sense among some that Sega was perhaps rushing the Mega CD to market, especially in Japan. The hardware was first announced in June 1991 at the Tokyo Toy Show, and launched in Japan just six months later with only two games: Heavy Nova and Sol-Feace. By the end of the year it still only had six titles, only one of which (Funky Horror Band) was actually published by Sega. It was quickly becoming clear that with a huge increase in storage – CD software could now hold more than 640 MB of data compared to around 2 MB in the biggest cartridges at the time – came increases in development time, and as such games were extremely slow to launch for the system. Sega itself wasn't able to launch its second title until May 1992, five months after launch.

Luckily, by the time the expansion came to the west, developers had had extra time to work on software for it. Launching in North America ten months later on 15 October 1992, the Sega CD – as it had been renamed there, given the lack of 'Mega' branding on the Genesis console – retailed for $299 and was bundled with two games, Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective Vol 1 and the 4-in-1 compilation Sega Classics Arcade Collection. Another six months later the system finally arrived in Europe, launching on 2 April 1993 and bundled with three games: a new five-game version of Sega Classics Arcade Collection, Sol-Feace and Cobra Command.

The Mega CD received praise for bringing another dimension to what was possible on the Mega Drive hardware, but also received some criticism for the quality of many of its games. As you're about to find as you read through the next section, the majority of Mega CD titles fell into one of two categories: games that relied heavily on FMV (full-motion video) and had minimal interactivity as a result, and ports of existing Mega Drive games that looked and played almost identically but had been 'enhanced' with a new

CD audio soundtrack and maybe an FMV intro. When developers put their mind to it, though, the Mega CD was home to some truly memorable titles, including the likes of Hideo Kojima's Snatcher, Sega's Sonic CD and the controversial Night Trap.

This section of the book contains the 153 games released for the Mega CD and Sega CD in North America, Europe, Australia and South America during the hardware's original run. As in the Mega Drive section, the terms Mega CD and Sega CD will be interchangeable: I refer to the hardware as the Sega CD during any entries for games released in North America but not Europe: otherwise, I refer to it as the Mega CD.

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SEGA CD has 32-bit compatibility (if you're wise enough to add a Genesis 32X™).
So it has the technological muscle to deliver the kind of intense, epic, next-GENERATION gaming experiences you've been waiting for — on CD!
SEGA

3 NINJAS KICK BACK / HOOK

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Malibu Interactive / Core Design

THIS TWO-IN-ONE PACKAGE with 'Double Deal' brandished on the box puts together two Sony Imagesoft games. Hook is also available as a standalone Mega CD game and appears later in this chapter, so let's focus on 3 Ninjas Kick Back for now because this bundle is the only way to buy it. For the most part this game looks and plays like the Genesis version, but it does have a few improvements. The first of these is a full CD-quality soundtrack with music taken from the movie, while the second is occasional tutorial video clips recorded especially for the game by the film's actor Victor Wong. Finally, a pair of first-person levels are added to this version, in which the player rides a skateboard and a hang-glider. ■

FACT

Much like other Sega CD games that were based on Genesis titles, there are loading screens between each stage where there wasn't before. It's a trade-off, then, between better music or faster play.

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Opera House

WESTWOOD ASSOCIATES' ICONIC RPG Eye of the Beholder was ported to the SNES but didn't see a Mega Drive release. Instead, role-playing nuts would have to shell out for the Mega CD to play the game on Sega's console. Players gather a party of four characters – either creating their own from scratch or using a default set – and explore the sewers and catacombs underneath the city of Waterdeep to try and discover the source of evil that seems to be seeping up to surface level. The game is played from a first-person perspective and the player moves a cursor with the D-Pad as if they were using a mouse. The Sega Mouse is also supported, and is by far the best way to play. ■

FACT

One huge benefit the Mega CD version has over all the others is an exclusive soundtrack by Streets of Rage composer Yuzo Koshiro.

THE ADVENTURES OF BATMAN & ROBIN

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Clockwork Tortoise

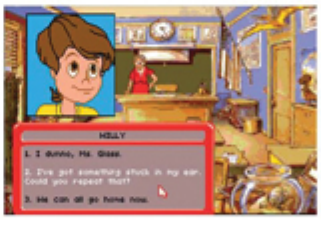
YOU'RE ABOUT TO discover that a huge number of Mega CD games are just Mega Drive games with a better soundtrack, so fair play to Sega for ensuring that the disc-based version of The Adventures of Batman & Robin – despite still being based on the animated series of the same name – is completely different to the Mega Drive one. Instead of a beat 'em up, the Mega CD game is a driving adventure in which you have to jump in either your Batmobile or Batwing (depending on the stage) and take on six unique missions, be that getting to the bank in time before Poison Ivy robs it, destroying the Riddler's toy 18-wheelers or taking part in a deadly amusement park race organised by the Joker. ■

FACT

There are 17 minutes of animated cut-scenes made exclusively for the game by Warner Bros Animation. Fans consider them the 'lost episode' of the animated series.

THE ADVENTURES OF WILLY BEAMISH

Year 1993
Publisher Dynamix
Developer Infinite Laser Dog



YOU KNOW YOUR game's load times are long when it lets you bring up a playable screensaver when you press Start. That's the main issue with The Adventures of Willy Beamish, an otherwise charming point and click adventure game starring a nine-year-old lad called Willy who's having a bad time. He got detention on the last day of school, his dad has been laid off so he can't pay for Willy's entry in the Nintari video game championships, and worst of all (unknown to him) a sweetener company called Tootsweet is planning to force a sewage crisis to extort money from the town. The game is played in typical point and click style, with the player able to select a number of hotspots and choose Willy's dialogue during conversations. ■

FACT

The Sega CD version has an exclusive mini-game. When Willy plays his Nintari console he'll get to play Super Space K'Noidtrix, a sort of mix between Space Invaders, Tetris and Arkanoid.

AFTER BURNER III

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer CSK Research Institute

BEAR WITH ME, because this is a bit confusing. In the arcades, there were two After Burner games, then Sega released G-LOC (which got a Mega Drive port, as seen earlier in this book). G-LOC then got a sequel called Strike Fighter, and After Burner III is a renamed Mega CD port of that. Technically, then, this is the fourth game but let's not worry about that. It actually merges aspects of both After Burner and G-LOC: it shares the former's general aim to get through each stage by simply surviving, whereas it shares the latter's first-person viewpoint. That said, you can also choose to play from a third-person view, making it feel far more like a true After Burner sequel. ■

FACT

Strike Fighter could only be played with a first-person viewpoint. The ability to switch to third-person was only added for the home port, so technically the After Burner name is valid.

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN VS THE KINGPIN

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

THIS MEGA CD version of Spider-Man vs the Kingpin is similar to the Mega Drive version for the most part: the plot and controls are the same, and most of the levels are identical. That said, it's still got its fair share of changes, the most notable being the addition of animated cutscenes which add more flavour (and terrible voice acting) to proceedings. The game's also less linear now: players are given a map of Manhattan and choose where to travel next. A few extra stages have been added, including a fight with the Vulture in a subway and Mysterio's Funhouse, and you also have your obligatory CD quality soundtrack, complete with a new theme song by hard rock band Mr Big. ■

FACT

The Mega CD port wasn't all good news. The wonderfully original ability to take photos of enemies and bosses to earn money and buy more web fluid was removed from this version.

ANDROID ASSAULT: THE REVENGE OF BARI-ARM

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Human Entertainment

IN THE YEAR 2192, a group of distant alien warriors called the Zias sets up a colony on one of Saturn's moons and uses it as a base to plan an attack on the Earth. They've already annihilated the Earth United Nations colony on Jupiter and now they're planning their next assault, so Earth decides to fight back by creating Bari-Arm, a cyber-attack vehicle that isn't just powerful, it's actually self-aware and tactically intelligent. Android Assault is a shoot 'em up in which you play as Bari-Arm in seven stages of action. Although it usually looks like a standard space fighter, when you collect enough power-up icons you'll transform into mech form until you take a hit (which happens quicker, because it's bigger). ■

FACT

Despite the Android Assault name on the game box, the game itself makes no mention of this title and simply says Bari-Arm (the Japanese name) on the title screen.

THE ANIMALS!

Year 1994
Publisher Software Toolworks
Developer Arnowitz Studios

ALTHOUGH THE MEGA CD was obviously designed primarily for games, the CD-ROM format was also being praised by PC owners for its ability to present multimedia content, especially in terms of reference software. A few of these PC titles made the jump over to Sega's console, including The Animals!, an educational guide to all creatures great and small produced by the San Diego Zoo. Players can explore a map screen to discover a bunch of information about animals and their habitats. The disc contains 60 minutes of video, 1,300 colour photographs, 2,500 written articles and 150 minutes of audio. Although it was praised for this amount of content, some criticised the quality of the video and photographs, both of which were grainy even for then. ■

FACT

The San Diego Zoo is the most visited zoo in the United States. It was opened in 1916 and, as of the time of writing, has more than 3,500 animals of more than 800 species.

A/X-101

Year 1994
Publisher Absolute Entertainment
Developer Micronet

IF YOU'RE HOPING we make contact with aliens soon, I hope you're the patient sort: according to this game it doesn't happen until the year 2500. Even worse, the aliens are an evil, war-loving race called the Gurzons, and they want to destroy the Earth. Thankfully, our pals from the planet Prism have an advanced weapon called A/X-101 which may be powerful enough to make the Gurzons retreat. Playing as an Earth Defence Force pilot, you have to fly to Prism and get A/X-101 before it's too late. This is a rail shooter where the path is pre-determined and all you do is point your cursor and aim at enemies and incoming projectiles. The vast majority of the game consists of FMV footage, with enemies overlaid. ■

FACT

FMV rail shooters are generally divisive, and this was no different. UK mags *Mega Power* and *Sega Power* gave it 80 per cent and 62 per cent respectively, but *Sega Pro* and *Mega* gave it 10 per cent and 4 per cent.

BATMAN RETURNS

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Malibu Interactive

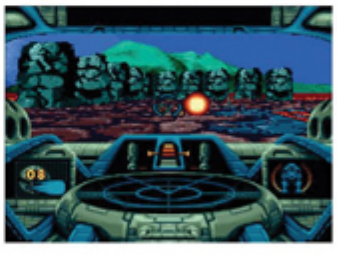
AS WELL AS the ability to play video and CD-quality audio, the Mega CD had a few other hardware tricks up its sleeve. One of these was an advanced sprite and tilemap scaling and rotation system, which delivered results similar to (but more impressive than) the Mode 7 effect on the SNES. One of the earliest games to show this off was an enhanced port of the Mega Drive game Batman Returns. While it contains the same platforming stages as its cartridge-based sibling, the CD version also includes some new racing stages – making use of the scaling features, naturally – where Batman speeds the Batmobile or Batskiboat through traffic-infested roads and sewers. These racing sections featured heavily in Sega's initial marketing for the console in Europe. ■

FACT

If you aren't a fan of either the racing or platforming sections, the game gives you the option to skip them entirely and just play one type of stage.

BATTLECORPS

Year 1994
Publisher Core Design
Developer Core Design



CORE DESIGN WAS all in on the Mega CD and released a bunch of games and ports for the hardware in its relatively short life. Battlecorps is arguably the most visually impressive of these games offering first-person shooting action inside a giant mech. Playing as one of the titular Battlecorps, you have to stomp your Bipedal Attack Machine (BAM) through 13 stages of combat as you take on a series of Battlebots, defensive machinery that was being used for protection by colonists but was turned evil by a corporation's virus. The mech's controls take a little getting used to but are surprisingly versatile once you do, making movement speed, separate head movement, weapon selection and map toggle all available with just a three-button controller. ■

FACT

In an interview with a Core fansite, programmer Jon Hilliard said one of the proudest moments in his career was tricking the Mega CD's floor-scaling system to create textured walls in Battlecorps.

BC RACERS

Year 1995
Publisher Time Warner Interactive
Developer Core Design

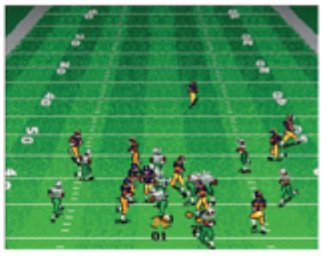
CHARACTER-THEMED KARTING GAMES may be ten a penny these days but a couple of years after the first Super Mario Kart the idea was still something of a novelty. The thing is, Core only really had one 'known' character, meaning BC Racers is set in the world of Chuck Rock, with most of the playable characters created just for this game The twist is that while there are only six vehicles to choose from, each contains two characters: one to drive, and one to attack opponents. The main choice is obviously Chuck and his son, but other pairings include the bosses from the two main games (Gary Gritter and Brick Jagger), or other poor musician puns like Bob Hardley and Jimi Handtrix, or Granite Jackstone and Tina Burna. ■

FACT

When UK publication *Sega Magazine* first broke the news about BC Racers being in development, it revealed that the working title was Chuck Rally: Rocky Racers.

BILL WALSH COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Year 1993
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer High Score Productions



THE JOHN MADDEN series never made it to the Mega CD, but EA did at least manage to bring one American football game to the hardware. Bill Walsh College Football is an enhanced version of the Mega Drive version, but the enhancements only really extend to the actual visuals to a slight degree. The more notable changes fall into two main categories: improved sounds (both in terms of sound effects and crowd noise on the field, and the TV style soundtrack and college fight songs off it), and the video content. The latter takes the form of 25 minutes of interviews with Walsh on all aspects of college football, ranging from choosing a university and what it's like on campus, to how to deal with the media. ■

FACT

Bill Walsh passed away in 2007 and the playing field in San Francisco's Candlestick Park was renamed Bill Walsh Field. Sadly, the stadium was then demolished in 2015.

BLACK HOLE ASSAULT

Year 1992
Publisher Micronet
Developer Bignet USA

EVEN THOUGH MICRONET'S Heavy Nova was roundly panned by critics, it seemed someone cared enough about it to create a sequel. Forty years after the events of the first game, the alien Akirovs have broken the peace treaty and are destroying the probes Earth keeps sending into space to look for new resources. You have to take two C.A.M. mechs (Cybernetic Anthropomorphised Machines) and take out the Akirovians' own giant robots. Whereas Heavy Nova was split into action platformer and one-on-one fighting sections, Black Hole Assault focuses solely on the latter, essentially turning the game into a robotic Street Fighter, albeit one with a story mode that includes a series of animated cinematic cutscenes complete with CD-based voice acting. ■

FACT

Just in case you weren't aware this launched in the early '90s, the game's box claims it features 'eight rude war machines', 'kickin' CD animation' and a 'pumpin' soundtrack'.

BLOODSHOT

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Domark

AS A FIRST-PERSON shooter on a 16-bit system Bloodshot already looked remarkable for a Mega Drive game when it launched in 1994, so it should perhaps be no surprise that the Mega CD version doesn't make massive visual improvements. It's mainly the performance side of things that's most noticeable: the hefty slowdown that occurs during big shoot-outs is far less serious and some of the buggier textures now look how they were originally supposed to. The Mega CD version also contains a brand new soundtrack which, while arranged by the same composer as the Mega Drive version, has more of a trance vibe to it (as the kids say). Because loading is slower from a CD, though, it does have fewer enemies and smaller stages than the cartridge version. ■

FACT

A US Sega CD version of Bloodshot (under its Battle Frenzy name) was sold by a website called Good Deal Games in 2003, without permission from Acclaim or Domark. It isn't considered a legal release.

BOUNCERS

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Dynamix

HERE'S A STRANGE one. Bouncers is a basketball game and fighting game hybrid where you play as an actual basketball. There are eight Bouncers to choose from – a caveman called Ugh, a superhero called Dash, a little kid called Chip and so on – and you take on each opponent one at a time, as you would in a one-on-one fighting game. Each stage has two or three basketball nets in it, and the rather odd aim is to force yourself into these nets to score. What makes this difficult is that your normal jump isn't high enough to reach the net and the game has realistic physics, so you may have to damage your opponent then jump onto them in order to get enough height to dunk yourself. ■

FACT

The game contains a bonus section where each Bouncer gets their own animated short showing off their personality. The voice acting for martial arts expert Fu is perhaps a little outdated, let's say.

BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA

Year 1993
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Psygnosis

WHEREAS SOME OF Sony Imagesoft's Sega CD games were mainly the Genesis versions with new soundtracks, it did still push the boat out a bit with some of its other CD-based releases. Bram Stoker's Dracula is a strong example of this, because it's a completely different game to the cartridge-based one. Playing as Jonathan Harker – albeit a digitised version played by someone who looks nothing like Keanu Reeves – you make your way through seven stages in order to kill Dracula. The backgrounds for these stages are actually video sequences showing rendered 3D scenery, and as the screen scrolls to the right to the video continues to move, giving the impression the background is moving too. It's a cool effect, if extremely grainy. ■

FACT

The action isn't strictly limited to side-scrolling punching and kicking in this game: one stage has you riding a horse from a third-person viewpoint (into an FMV background, naturally).

BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA / MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Psygnosis

HERE'S ANOTHER OF Sony Imagesoft's double game bundles, and – much like the 3 Ninjas and Hook bundle – another title that wasn't released as a standalone game. The Sega CD version of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein was only available in this two-pack, which is something of a shame because, like Dracula, it's a completely different game to its Genesis counterpart. Instead of a side-scrolling action platformer, this is an adventure game in the point and click style, with players directly controlling Frankenstein's monster as it wanders around, collecting items and using them to get past various obstacles. Occasionally you'll get into a fight with someone, at which point the game bizarrely turns into proper one-on-one combat like some sort of gothic fighting game. ■

BRUTAL: PAWS OF FURY

Year 1994
Publisher GameTek
Developer Imagitec Design

GAMETEK'S INTERESTING ANIMAL-BASED fighting game was yet another Mega Drive title that was given a Mega CD port. As with most other games that got the same treatment, the basic structure remains the same as the cartridge version: put both games side by side and you'd struggle to notice any difference, at least visually or in terms of controls. Naturally, though, the game's been enhanced with a CD soundtrack, as well as clearer sound samples, along with a bunch of animated cutscenes designed to enhance the main story mode. GameTek has also added a 'Fun Room' option, which includes a Sound Test (accompanied by a looping animation of an animal band playing each song on a stage) and a section called 'Outtakes', which shows early cinematics from the cutscenes. ■

FACT

At the start of the Mega Drive version, Kung Fu Bunny kicks the Sega logo onto the screen. Since all Mega CD games launch with a standard Sega logo, he kicks the GameTek logo instead.

CADILLACS AND DINOSAURS: THE SECOND CATACLYSM

Year 1994
Publisher Rocket Science Games
Developer Rocket Science Games

THE ORIGINAL CAPCOM Cadillacs and Dinosaurs game – based on the comic series of the same name – was a fantastic arcade beat 'em up that used the same engine as the studio's legendary Final Fight. Fans who dreamed of being able to play it at home… would need to keep dreaming, because The Second Cataclysm is about as far removed from that game as you can get. Instead, it's another FMV rail shooter – the flavour of the day during the Sega CD era – in which you control Jack and Hannah's '53 Cadillac as it drives through nine stages. Control is limited to shooting the preset obstacles that appear in front of you and making sure you don't bump into anything that could trigger a death cutscene. ■

FACT

In the credits, under the role of 'Rocket Scientists' are a bunch of FMV programmers, among them a young Elon Musk, who two decades later would take the role literally.

CHUCK ROCK

Year 1993
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Core Design

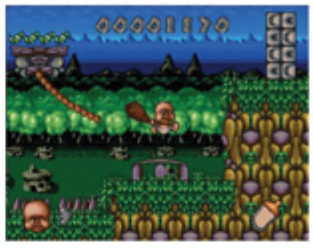
AS PREVIOUSLY EXPLAINED in this chapter, Core Design didn't just release entirely original content on the Mega CD: it also took some of its best games from the Mega Drive library and made those available in CD format too. Chuck Rock certainly falls into the latter category and looks and plays identical to the Mega Drive version, with no extra stages or anything like that. It does, however, have a new soundtrack credited to 'Martin's Music Workshop', which uses many of the same melodies as the Mega Drive music but presents them as an actual rock score that received plenty of praise from critics. The game also opens with a lengthy cartoon cinematic explaining the story, but sadly doesn't have one at the end (presumably because fewer people would see it). ■

FACT

The animated intro originally appeared in the Amiga version of the game (without a voiceover, though). The Mega CD version has been censored to remove a shot of Chuck's girlfriend's bum.

CHUCK ROCK II: SON OF CHUCK

Year 1993
Publisher Virgin Games
Developer Core Design



WELL, LET'S FACE it, if you're going to put Chuck Rock on the Mega CD then you may as well put Chuck Rock II on there as well. Like its predecessor, Son of Chuck doesn't immediately look noticeably different on the Mega CD, because none of the general gameplay mechanics have been tweaked, and the game looks visually identical the vast majority of the time. There are a couple of slight visual tweaks, such as the way rocks rotate and the way some bosses appear, but for the most part you'd be hard-pressed to notice a big difference. Once again, though, it does have a completely new CD-quality soundtrack by Martin Iveson (so THAT must be who Martin's Music Workshop is), and also comes with an animated intro. ■

FACT

Martin Iveson stuck around with Core for a while and created the sound effects for Tomb Raider, so that crunching noise Lara makes when she lands after a big drop is his fault.

CLIFFHANGER

Year 1993
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Malibu Interactive

THE CLIFFHANGER GAME was met with criticism by the media and gamers alike so any changes made to the Sega CD version would have been welcome ones. For the most part, these changes aren't forthcoming: most of the game looks and plays just like the Genesis version. It does, however, have a new stage in which Stallone's character snowboards down a hill while an avalanche follows after him. There's also roughly 20 minutes of movie footage: there's an optional intro showing early (non-mountain) scenes from the film that explain the general plot, and this is followed by short clips appearing throughout the main game. These clips are extremely low quality, though, so it's not like the game would have replaced your VHS copy. ■

FACT

Just in case you aren't sure how realistic the snowboarding section is, the game's box claims 'you won't need to go to the slopes this year: just pop in your Cliffhanger Sega CD'. A slight stretch.

COBRA COMMAND

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Wolf Team

THE ON-RAILS FMV genre had more than its fair share of representatives on the Mega CD, but there was one thing that could make such a limited type of game more tolerable: if the footage in question was in in anime style. Cobra Command (known as Thunder Storm in its native Japan) has you flying an attack helicopter called the LX- 3FX through New York's city streets, the Grand Canyon and Rome as you gun down a horde of terrorists while trying to avoid crashing into the scenery. The FMV sequences for each stage are non-stop action, and though players' abilities are limited to just moving up, down, left, right and firing at targets, it's still an entertaining enough rollercoaster ride for the short while it lasts. ■

FACT

Cobra Command was released on both the Saturn and PlayStation in Japan, where the video quality was noticeably better. It was even better in 2009 when it got an iOS port, but this no longer works on modern devices.

COLORS OF MODERN ROCK

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Digital Pictures

THIS INTERESTING LITTLE disc was made available through a Sega mail order promotion and was planned to be the first in a Digital Pictures series called Virtual VCR, a 'ground-breaking technology' that not only showed videos, but could also be paused, rewound, fast-forwarded and played in slow motion. It's a media player app, basically.

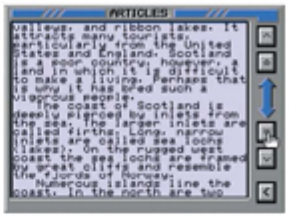
This disc contains six music videos: 'Doona Everywhere' by Too Much Joy, 'Back Door Romeo' by T-Ride, 'Outside the Sun' by The Belltower, 'Hooker' by Xtra Large, 'To Be With You' by Mr Big and 'Haven't Got a Clue' by Dramarama. As well as choosing which video they want to watch, players can also hit the C button while the video is playing to capture a screenshot and save the still frame in a gallery. ■

FACT

The second and third Virtual VCR games were supposed to be Prince and the New Power Generation's Diamonds and Pearls, and a collection of short films from the March of Time. Both were cancelled.

COMPTON'S INTERACTIVE ENCYCLOPEDIA

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer The Learning Company



BACK IN 1989, Britannica released Compton's Multimedia Encyclopedia, the first ever multimedia CD-ROM encyclopedia (there had been text-only ones before). It then saw a number of updated versions (along with a slight name change): this Sega CD port is based on the 1995 edition. It contains over 34,000 written articles from the book version of Compton's Encyclopedia, as well as over 5,000 photographs, 30 video clips and a bunch of sounds including speeches from the likes of JFK, Martin Luther King Jr and Franklin Roosevelt. Since it's based on a PC CD-ROM title, the user has to move a cursor with the D-Pad, which can be a little clunky. Sadly, it didn't support the Sega Mouse, which would have greatly helped with navigation. ■

FACT

A copy of Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia was bundled in North America with the JVC X'Eye, a combination Genesis and Sega CD better known by its Japanese name, the Wondermega.

CORPSE KILLER

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Digital Pictures

KILLING CORPSES? WHAT'S the point if they're already dead? Why, because we're talking about zombies, of course. Corpse Killer is a brilliantly terrible FMV action game where you play as an unnamed marine who's been sent to an uncharted tropical island to kill a bumload of undead creeps and take out the doctor who's planning to use them to take over the world. The majority of the game is a lightgun shooter, where the screen scrolls slowly through the stage – most of the action was shot in Puerto Rico – as you shoot as many live-action zombies as you can. The gunplay is interspersed with cutscenes starring your two partners: a rastafarian and an attractive female reporter who obviously ends up in a bikini at the end for no reason. ■

FACT

The live-action scenes in Corpse Killer were directed by John Lafia, who directed *Child's Play 2*.

CRIME PATROL

Year 1994
Publisher American Laser Games
Developer American Laser Games

AMERICAN LASER GAMES specialised in arcade lightgun games that ran FMV footage from laserdiscs (hence the name) and had the player shoot at the screen. Crime Patrol plays similarly to its most popular title, Mad Dog McCree, but puts the player in a modern police setting instead of the Old West. You play as a rookie cop who's thrown into a bunch of dangerous situations and has to shoot their way out of trouble. Eventually you're promoted to Detective, then SWAT, then Delta, each of which has its own missions, culminating in a night vision sting. The game supports the Menacer light gun, but also lets you play using the Sega Mouse, which is arguably the most accurate way to play it. ■

FACT

The sequel Crime Patrol 2: Drug Wars was also planned for the Sega CD, but while it launched on the 3DO and CD-i, it never made it to Sega's system.

DARK WIZARD

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Renovation Products

THIS IMPRESSIVELY DEEP turn-based strategy game drops players into the land of Cheshire, which is under attack by the dark wizard(™) Velonese and the four elemental demons he's summoned. You have to choose one of four different rulers and lead their army to gain control of Cheshire and stop Velonese summoning the dark god Arliman. Two of the playable rulers are on the side of good (Armer IX is a strong fighter and Robin is has great leadership skills), while the other two are notably more devious (Krystal is a murderous sorceress and Amon is a vampire), so the leader you choose does have some impact on the way the game progresses. You can either watch each battle or just be told what happened in a text box. ■

FACT

Dark Wizard's script was written mainly by Kenji Terada. He was also the co-writer of the first three Final Fantasy games, so it's safe to say he had previous experience.

DEMOLITION MAN

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Alexandria

THE DEMOLITION MAN game on the Genesis was a surprisingly entertaining title that mixed side-scrolling action platforming with some overheard free-roaming shooting stages. It's not entirely surprising, then, that the Sega CD version is pretty much the same game with enhanced audio and some video clips. The music mainly takes tracks from the Genesis version, tweaks them and presents them as CD audio (the results aren't quite as impressive as those in other games), while fans are treated to clips from the movie at the start of the game and in between each of the stages. Other than these two changes, there isn't much that sets the CD and cartridge versions apart, so you may as well stick with the cheaper Genesis version if buying today. ■

FACT

One of the new CD quality music tracks is actually based on a piece of music that was exclusive to the SNES version of the game.

DOUBLE SWITCH

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Digital Pictures

AS INNOVATIVE AS Night Trap was (see later entry), the fact it was designed for a VHS system that was ultimately never released meant it came with a number of limitations built in. Double Switch is an example of what Night Trap could have been with those limitations removed, as it makes better use of the Mega CD's feature set to provide an experience similar to that of its predecessor, but one with far more variation, thereby leading to a less linear game. The game stars teen heartthrob Corey Haim as Eddie, who tells you he's the owner of an Egyptian themed hotel called the Edward Arms. Eddie says he's set up the hotel with cameras and traps to protect the residents but someone's locked him in the basement, so it's your job to control the security system. As in Night Trap, a large part of the game involves checking the cameras in each room and trapping any intruders you see. The difference here is that each room now has multiple traps, meaning you also need to figure out which one to use. There's also now a random element: whereas Night Trap was a completely linear game, this time some key intruder appearances are scripted but other intruders can arrive at completely random times. The result is a game that keeps the players on their toes as they play through the story and discover its many twists and turns, though it can occasionally get a little complicated for its own good. Try it for yourself: it was re-released on PS4, Switch and PC. ■

FACT

Corey Haim and Dana Plato, who had the lead roles in Double Switch and Night Trap respectively, were both teen stars who both fell into a life of drug addiction and both tragically died in their 30s.

DRACULA UNLEASHED

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer ICOM Simulations

A DELIGHTFULLY CHEESY FMV adventure set 10 years after the events of the Bram Stoker novel. You play as Alexander Morris, the American brother of Quincey Morris (who died while killing Dracula in the book). Turns out Dracula's back, so as Alexander explores London to find out more about his brother's past he also has to stop Dracula turning his fiancée Anisette into an undead bride. Dracula Unleashed contains two discs with a total of 85 minutes of video footage set over 143 scenes. You have to travel to various locations in London to find out what's going on, but your time is limited: visit a location at the wrong time or with the wrong item equipped and you may end up with teeth in your neck. ■

FACT

Dracula Unleashed was released on DVD in 2002. The video quality is obviously much better, plus it has a behind-the-scenes documentary and a blooper reel.

DRAGON'S LAIR

Year 1994
Publisher Readysoft
Developer Don Bluth Studios

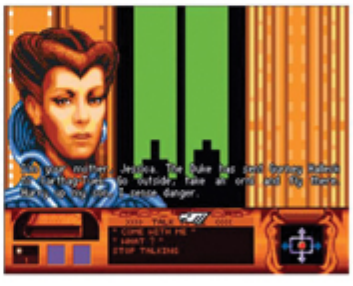
YOU CAN'T HAVE a console that specialises in full-motion video without having a port of the game that defined the interactive FMV genre. Dragon's Lair is a 'playable' cartoon where the player 'controls' Dirk the Daring as he enters the evil wizard Mordroc's castle and tries to rescue Princess Daphne from the dragon Singe. The reason I'm using the snarky quote marks is because Dragon's Lair is barely playable, even less so than most other FMV games. The game is essentially a linear cartoon that continues playing if the player hits the right buttons at the right time. If they fail to do so, a death animation plays instead. The whole thing becomes trial and error, making Dragon's Lair memorable as a technological milestone and not much else. ■

FACT

Dragon's Lair creator Don Bluth took his inspiration for Princess Daphne's look from his producer Gary Goldman's stack of *Playboy* magazines. So… yeah.

DUNE

Year 1993
Publisher Virgin Interactive
Developer Cryo Interactive



WHILE THE MEGA Drive's Dune game was a real-time strategy title by Westwood Studios, the Mega CD instead received a port of the ambitious Amiga and PC adventure game. The player takes on the role of Paul Atreides as he tries to drive the House Harkonnen from the Dune planet so he can take control over it and mine its valuable spice. The game essentially consists of two different genres mashed together: the underlying strategy genre sees you directing tribes to mine spice and eventually take part in combat, but this is split up with first-person exploration sections (similar to some dungeon crawling games) where you meet the planet's residents and talk to them with dialogue trees similar to a point-and-click game. ■

FACT

Though not 100 per cent based on the David Lynch movie, Dune features some clips from it as well as the appearances of some of its cast (most notably Kyle MacLachlan as Paul).

DUNGEON EXPLORER

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Westone

DESPITE THE TITLE this is actually the third game in the Dungeon Explorer series (after the original and its sequel on TurboGrafx and TurboGrafx-CD respectively). It's a misleading name in more ways than one: while it suggests a first-person exploration game like the dungeon crawlers of its time it's actually a top-down action game more in the style of Atari's Gauntlet. Up to four players must work together to work through the Darkling's mazes to find and rescue an imprisoned goddess said to grant her rescuer any wish they want. There are six different types of character to choose from: knight, ninja, monk, elf, mage and beast. Each has their own weapon and abilities, and their combat experience level can increase as they defeat enemies. ■

FACT

There was also a fourth game in the Dungeon Explorer series, but fans had to wait for it. Dungeon Explorer: Warriors of Ancient Arts launched on the DS in 2007.

DUNGEON MASTER II: THE LEGEND OF SKULLKEEP

Year 1994
Publisher JVC
Developer JVC

WHILE THE SNES got a port of the seminal 1987 RPG Dungeon Master, the Mega CD got something a little more modern in the shape of its 1993 sequel. Playing as a chap called Torham Zeb, you need to gather a team of 'champions' – some of whom are sleeping in the Cryovault chamber where you start the game – and explore the grounds of Castle Skullkeep to try and find the pieces of the Zo Link, a machine that can let people visit other planes of existence. The control system is similar to that of other dungeon crawling games, but since it's a little more complex than most it can be fiddly playing with a controller. The game supports the Sega Mouse, which is a far better way to play it. ■

FACT

Dungeon Master Nexus, the final game in the series, used a 3D graphics engine and was exclusive to the Sega Saturn, but it was only released in Japan.

EARTHWORM JIM: SPECIAL EDITION

Year 1995
Publisher Interplay
Developer Shiny Entertainment

EARTHWORM JIM WAS a huge success on the Mega Drive, so naturally Interplay was going to want a piece of the compact disc pie. To its credit, the Mega CD port of Earthworm Jim isn't a simple copy-and-paste job: it adds a few new features to keep fans happy. There's a new level called Big Bruty, where Jim is on a shipwreck and has to avoid a blind monster who can pick up his scent and kill him with one bite. Some of the stages have also been expanded with bonus sections – the first level, for example, now features an area where a 'nude' Jim is without his suit – and there are an additional 1,000 frames of animation. And, naturally, there's a new CD soundtrack because of course there is. ■

FACT

If you beat the Mega CD version on Easy difficulty, you'll be 'punished' with an extremely lengthy explanation of what worms are, which is full of deliberately incorrect facts.

ECCO THE DOLPHIN

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Novotrade

NOT EVEN EVERYONE'S favourite dolphin was able to resist the lure of a CD conversion. The Mega CD version of Ecco looks similar to the Mega Drive version but it's got a completely new soundtrack which is arguably much better: it's an easy listening fan's chillout paradise. It's also got six new levels that aren't in the Mega Drive version, though one of these is called The Sea of Silence and plays no music during it, which will be a letdown to the aforementioned easy listening fans. Other additions include a couple of educational clips about dolphins hidden inside glyphs in the game's Library stage, and improved sound effect quality. Really, though, this one's all about that new music, and it's great. ■

FACT

Sega released a CD album called Ecco: Songs of Time, containing Spencer Nilsen's music from both Mega CD games. That said, putting the game discs in a CD player does the same thing.

ECCO: THE TIDES OF TIME

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Novotrade

IF YOU THOUGHT Sega would give the original Ecco the Dolphin a Mega CD port but wouldn't bother doing the same with its sequel, you really haven't been paying attention to this section. Naturally, the CD version of Ecco: The Tides of Time looks and plays practically identical to the Mega Drive game, right down to the 3D sections where you jump through hoops in a third-person (well, third-dolphin) perspective. Once again, the main change here is the new soundtrack by Spencer Nilsen, which is similarly lovely to the first one. There's also around roughly 15 minutes of FMV clips which can be found by bumping into 'video glyphs': these are CGI sequences that retell the events of the first game. ■

FACT

The CGI sequences were created by Angel Studios, a small Californian developer who would eventually become Rockstar San Diego and lead the development on Red Dead Redemption.

ESPN BASEBALL TONIGHT

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Park Place Productions

MOST OF SONY Imagesoft's ESPN-licensed sports games were also given the Mega CD treatment. The CD version of Baseball Tonight was a much glossier affair than the Mega Drive one, with video footage of ESPN's Chris Berman talking at a virtual SportsCenter studio, along with (fairly minimal) commentary by Dan Patrick. Crowd noises were improved with new sounds that correspond to the action on the screen, and there are Jumbotron animations each time a home run is scored (though these really should have been possible on the cartridge version). One of the other big additions was real-life stadia: while the Mega Drive version only had a single stadium that hosted all the action in the game, the Mega CD boasted every stadium for all 28 MLB teams. ■

FACT

The PC version of Baseball Tonight was criticised for requiring 54 MB of hard drive space. That may seem laughably small today, but remember that in 1994 it wasn't uncommon for hard drives to be 350-400 MB.

ESPN NATIONAL HOCKEY NIGHT

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Park Place Productions

THE SEGA CD version of National Hockey Night adds a bunch of video sequences, with Bill Clement standing in the arena introducing each game. During matches everything looks and plays the same as the Genesis version but the sound has been greatly improved, with far more realistic crowd noises and the occasional organ music playing. One new addition is extremely infuriating, though: for some reason the game decides to freeze the action during a notable moment and show an FMV clip of something vaguely similar in a real hockey game. Scoring a goal is one thing – you could get away with it being a fake highlight – but when you body-check someone the game freezes to show you someone being body-checked, which is crazy when the puck is still active. ■

FACT

The Genesis version of National Hockey Night is missing the NHLPA licence, meaning there are no real player names in there. The Sega CD version includes both the NHL and NHLPA licences.

ESPN NBA HANGTIME '95

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Sony Imagesoft

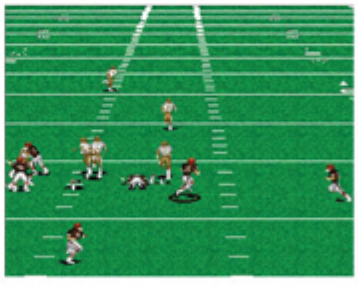
WHILE MOST OF the ESPN games were released on multiple systems, NBA Hangtime '95 was a Sega CD exclusive, meaning cartridge-based players were denied the delights of… whatever Sony was thinking at the time. Instead of a full 5-on-5 basketball game, Hangtime '95 is a 3-on-3 affair, with each of the 27 NBA teams represented by just three players. The action, then, is more arcade like with over-the-top dunks and the like. What's more, this is actually two games in one: hit the A button on the title screen and you'll switch to ESPN 2-on-2 World Tour, a frankly bizarre game where duos from around the world compete. These teams are grossly stereotypical: the Hawaii team wears grass skirts and the Japan team consists of sumo wrestlers. ■

FACT

The NBA portion has video clips of ESPN's Dan Patrick. Pity poor ESPN2 SportsNight co-anchor Stuart Scott, who was stuck presenting the 2-on-2 mode instead.

ESPN SUNDAY NIGHT NFL

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Ringler Studios



IT'S FAIR TO say that ESPN's Chris Berman was a busy man in the virtual ESPN world. Not only was he hosting the Baseball Tonight from his fake Sega CD studio, he was also taking on presenting duties for Sunday Night NFL at the same time. Commentary in the NFL game, meanwhile, was handled by Mike Patrick, not to be confused with Baseball Tonight's Dan Patrick (my head hurts). Each of the 28 NFL teams in the game has their own exclusive FMV intros, and Berman also appears at half time to not only discuss how the half went, but also show 'highlights' from other games in the league (which are really just randomly chosen NFL video clips with hilariously bad commentary dubbed over them). ■

FACT

Chris Berman joined ESPN a month after it launched in 1979 and hosted Sunday NFL Countdown on the channel from 1985 to 2016. So give him a break.

ETERNAL CHAMPIONS: CHALLENGE FROM THE DARK SIDE

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

THE SEQUEL TO Eternal Champions expands on its Mega Drive predecessor significantly, not least when it comes to the character roster. All 10 characters from the original game return here with slightly new looks, but this time they're joined by a bunch of new faces including an ancient Egyptian pharaoh named Ramses III, a female pirate from the 1500s called Riptide, a voodoo priestess named Raven and an Old West cowboy by the name of Dawson McShane. Add to that a bunch of hidden characters and there are 24 potential fighters to choose from this time. Also new to the game are 'Cinekills', a series of video-based fatalities where the Eternal Champion appears and kills your opponent in a gory FMV clip. ■

FACT

Five of the hidden characters are animals, including Yappy (a dog), Crispy (a chicken) and Rattles (a snake). There's also a Senator character, included to mock the video game violence debate.

FAHRENHEIT

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Infogrames

IF YOU'VE EVER wondered what it would be like to fight fires for a living, Fahrenheit does a brilliant job of… well, there are lots of clips of things on fire, at least. Playing as a rookie firefighter, you have to enter three blazing buildings – a house, a hotel with 112 rooms and a booby-trapped university – and rescue the victims trapped inside. Despite its impressively action-packed appearance, the game itself is little more than choosing a series of arrows to decide where to go next: the aim is to figure out which path to take before you run out of oxygen. In later levels the oxygen is so limited that you basically have to use trial and error and figure out, then remember the path to take. ■

FACT

You can only get Fahrenheit as a standalone Mega CD game in Europe and Japan. The North American release comes with both the Sega CD and Sega CD 32X versions.

FATAL FURY SPECIAL

Year 1995
Publisher JVC
Developer Funcom

THE MEGA DRIVE received ports of the first two Fatal Fury games, but whereas the SNES also got Fatal Fury Special, Sega's console missed out. That is, until it came to the Mega CD. This is an improved pseudo-sequel to Fatal Fury 2 which doubles the roster from eight playable characters to 16 (including characters from the first game and bosses) and also includes a new combo system to bring the series more in line with other fighting games like Super Street Fighter II Turbo. The game's snazzy CD soundtrack is recorded in Red Book audio: this means that (as is the case with some other Mega CD games) it was stored as normal music CD tracks, meaning you can put your disc in a CD player and listen to it. ■

FACT

Axel Hawk's stage is set in New York and shows various landmarks in the background, including the Pan Am building. The Pan Am sign changed to a MetLife one in 1992, but it isn't changed here.

FIFA INTERNATIONAL SOCCER: CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION

Year 1994
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Extended Play Productions

SANDWICHED IN BETWEEN the releases of FIFA International Soccer and its 1995 update, the Mega CD version of FIFA plays more like the former. The main addition is the replacement of the Mega Drive generated crowd noises with actual recordings of real-life football crowds. It also includes a bunch of FMV clips, including a lengthy full-screen intro (with footage from World Cup Italia '90) and a commercial for Adidas Predator football boots, one of the first examples of a full video advert in a game. Somewhat less welcome is the addition of two loading screens at half-time: one to load the half-time menu, and another to get back to the game. ■

FACT

There are a few bizarre cheat codes in the game. These include one to make the ball fly around wildly, and one for invisible walls. Including in the goal.

FINAL FIGHT CD

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer A-Wave

FANS OF CAPCOM'S legendary arcade game Final Fight were disappointed with the SNES home versions, which famously only offered two of the three playable characters, had no two-player support and even removed an entire stage. On the other hand, at least SNES owners actually had a version of the game, while Mega Drive players had to go without. This all changed in 1993 when Final Fight CD was released on the Mega CD and offered most of the features the SNES version was missing. Players could choose from all three characters – Guy, Cody and Haggar – and could also play with friends in two player co-op mode, plus the Industrial Area level from the SNES version was reinstated. Also new to this version was, naturally, a bespoke CD soundtrack. ■

FACT

If you successfully destroy the car in the first bonus stage in the arcade version, an enemy appears and says 'Oh my God!'. In the home versions (including the Mega CD) this is changed to 'Oh my car!'.

FLASHBACK: THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Delphine Software

THE GENESIS VERSION of Flashback had been advertised in magazines as 'a CD-ROM game on a cartridge', so when it did actually come to CD you could maybe forgive Delphine for not changing much. Sure enough, like so many other Genesis games ported to the Sega CD, the game's (already impressive) visuals remained virtually untouched, at least during normal gameplay. Where it differs is in the addition of a number of new video cutscenes that replace the in-game animated ones with CGI ones – and fairly high quality CGI for the time, at that – along with recorded voice acting instead of text dialogue. Although the rest of the game was essentially unchanged, these new scenes made what was already supposed to be a cinematic game feel even more so. ■

FACT

According to UK magazine *Mega Power* (which had planned to add a demo as a cover gift), Sega chose not to approve a European release because it had been so long since the cartridge version.

FLINK

Year 1994
Publisher Psygnosis
Developer Psygnosis

FLINK MAY HAVE only been available on the Mega Drive in Europe, but at least the Mega CD version made it to North America as well. It's probably just as well, because it's the best version of the game. That's not to say it's the best by a wide margin, mind you: the actual game is indistinguishable between both versions, and the CD version doesn't benefit from any extra stages, FMV cinematics or anything like that. The only major difference – and if you've been reading this section in order you probably know what's about to come next – is that the Mega CD version has a new CD soundtrack, and it's a particularly lovely one that really makes the most of the format. ■

FACT

Actually, the Mega CD version also includes Spanish and Dutch language options whereas the Mega Drive one doesn't, so gefeliciteerd als u die talen spreekt.

FORMULA ONE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP: BEYOND THE LIMIT

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

THIS VISUALLY IMPRESSIVE Formula One game features all the cars, all the tracks and almost all the racers from the 1993 F1 season: in fact, the only racer not in the game is Ayrton Senna because he was licensed to appear in another racing game by… let me check my notes… oh yes, Sega. The main mode here is Grand Prix – where you race through all 16 tracks in the order they appeared in the 1993 season – but there's also an interesting 1993 mode where you're given a bunch of challenges based on scenarios from that season. Each of these opens with a video of the actual race, then you take over. The game makes extensive use of sprite scaling and rotation effects. ■

FACT

Since Ayrton Senna isn't in the game, he's been replaced by a generic racer called PLAYER. He can be renamed, though, so just rename him SENNA and you're good to go.

GROUND ZERO TEXAS

Year 1993
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Digital Pictures

NIGHT TRAP MAY have been Digital Pictures' most popular game, but Ground Zero Texas was its most accomplished. An alien race called the Reticulans has landed in El Cadron, a tiny town in South Texas, and has started abducting its citizens and replacing them with alien clones. You play as a tactical expert who travels to El Cadron to take out the Reticulans with four special BattleCams mounted at various locations in the town: the Cantina, Main Street, Plaza Square and a hotel window.

The aim is similar to Night Trap to an extent in that you have to switch between the four cameras to keep an eye on what's going on, but rather than triggering traps to catch the aliens you instead shoot them in light gun style shooting gallery sections (though the game doesn't support any light guns). As your BattleCams take damage from shots, they eventually get broken and are out of action until they're repaired by the secret agent manning each one. On occasion a special cutscene will trigger where an agent is attacked: if you don't make the shot here the agent gets abducted and won't be able to repair your BattleCam, and if you have three broken BattleCams at any point it's Game Over. Although it's undeniably cheesy and its shooting gallery sections are a tad basic, Ground Zero Texas's endearing personality – combined with the sheer silliness of seeing space aliens dressed like bad Power Rangers enemies in a sleepy Texas village – makes it one of the Mega CD exclusives worth tracking down. ■

FACT

Ground Zero Texas was directed by Dwight H. Little. He also directed *Halloween 4*, another low-budget classic that doesn't get the respect it deserves. Um… in my opinion.

HEART OF THE ALIEN: OUT OF THIS WORLD PARTS I AND II

Year 1994
Publisher Virgin Interactive
Developer Interplay

GIVEN THAT SEGA simply gave Flashback some nifty new CGI cutscenes and sent it on its way, you'd have forgiven Virgin for doing the same with its predecessor. And yes, Out of this World (aka Another World in Europe) does have a great new CD soundtrack and improved sound effects. However, it also comes with an entirely new game, exclusive to the Sega CD, which follows on from the events of the first game and now has you playing as Buddy (the alien friend Lester encountered) as he returns to the prison to rescue his fellow villagers. Although it was generally praised at the time, the first game's creator Éric Chahi publicly stated that it didn't meet his vision and that he didn't consider it the proper sequel. ■

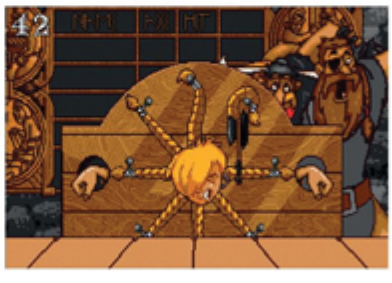
FACT

The word Buddy says to Lester in Another World is often debated, because the sound sample isn't great quality. The re-recorded Sega CD version confirms that it's 'Matsuba'.

HEIMDALL

Year 1994
Publisher JVC
Developer Core Design

THIS ACTION RPG was originally designed for home computers (most notably the Amiga) before getting a Sega CD port. When the Norse god Loki steals Odin's sword, Freya's spear and Thor's hammer and hides them all in the mortal world, the gods create a virgin birth called Heimdall who grows up to become a great Viking chieftain. Accompanied by a party of five characters (though only two can accompany him at any time), Heimdall must travel through Asgard, Midgard and Utgard in search of the three legendary items while fighting monsters and avoiding various traps along the way. Combat takes place via a first-person perspective and has you selecting icons to attack, defend and cast magic in real time. The game was praised for its impressive art style and animations. ■



FACT

Heimdall was most famous for its axe-throwing mini-game, where you have to free a trapped girl who's chained to a set of stocks by her pigtails, by throwing axes at her and trying to cut them.

HOOK

Year 1992
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Core Design

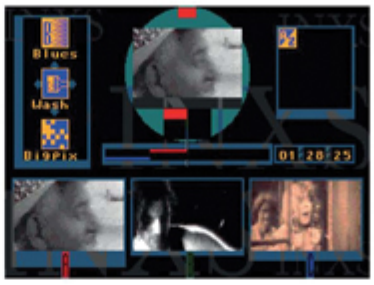
YET ANOTHER OF Sony Imagesoft's Mega Drive to Mega CD ports, Hook's changes are almost all aural ones and they're a mixed bag of extremes. On one hand, the decision to replace the Mega Drive version's music with the actual John Williams score from the movie is a stroke of genius and makes for a truly epic soundtrack for what's generally considered a fun platformer. On the other hand, the game also adds voice acting, and presumably after realising it couldn't get the likes of Robin Williams, Julia Roberts and Dustin Hoffman to reprise their roles for the game, Sony decided to hire a bunch of people who sounded like they'd only just learned how to talk and were now being forced to read a script at gunpoint. ■

FACT

The Mega CD version of Hook also contains three very brief and poor quality clips from the movie, none of which contain any of the cast.

INXS: MAKE MY VIDEO

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Digital Pictures



DIGITAL PICTURE'S EXPERIMENTAL Make My Video series has the player editing their own music videos for a series of artists. The INXS version has the oddest premise of the bunch: a pair of attractive women are playing pool at a bar and a series of patrons – a pair of surfer dudes, a shy nerd, some biker chicks – take turns trying to win their affection by asking you to edit an INXS music video. There are three songs available ('Heaven Sent', 'Baby Don't Cry' and 'Not Enough Time'), and you're given three feeds: the video itself and two feeds of stock footage. By pressing the A, B and C buttons you switch between the feeds, while using the D-Pad to add effects. ■

FACT

The best/worst bit is the way bizarre requests are shoehorned in so there's an actual game in there, like the surfers saying they want you to make sure you add shots of books.

IRON HELIX

Year 1994
Publisher Spectrum HoloByte
Developer Drew Pictures

'PREPARE YOURSELF FOR the most stunning 3D strategy adventure ever created.' So claims the box for Iron Helix, an FMV game where you explore the *Jeremiah O'Brien*, a large space ship where all the crew have been killed by its security robot after a viral outbreak on the ship affected their DNA, causing the robot to no longer recognise them. It's your job to control another robot, guiding it through the ship's corridors in search of the fallen staff so you can extract their DNA and use it to gain clearance to secure areas, eventually reaching and deactivating its devastating Iron Helix weapon to avoid it going off and starting a war. The problem is, the security robot is still on the prowl, so you have to do all this without getting caught. ■

FACT

The Sega CD version has an exclusive ending where you return to your base expecting a hero's welcome but are instead tied to a chair and tortured while interrogated for information on Iron Helix. Um… congratulations.

JAGUAR XJ220

Year 1993
Publisher Sega / JVC
Developer Core Design

THEY MAY HAVE had the Lotus games, but EA and Gremlin weren't the only ones to have a racing series dedicated solely to one manufacturer. Core Design's Jaguar XJ220 was also focused on a single car: see if you can guess which one. Players can choose from… well, one car as they race through 16 different countries: UK, Egypt, Switzerland, USA, Canada, Japan, Australia, Greece, Italy, Germany, France, Brazil, Spain, the Netherlands, China and Peru. The game had previously launched on the Amiga home computer but the Mega CD version is generally considered superior due to the use of sprite scaling to give the game an appearance similar to Sega's arcade version of OutRun (as well as its token CD soundtrack, naturally). ■

FACT

One area in which the Mega CD version is inferior to the Amiga one is the removal of advertising boards for UK gaming publication *CVG*. Of course, I'm biased because I worked there.

JEOPARDY!

Year 1993
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Absolute Entertainment

WHILE GAMETEK HANDLED the other console versions of Jeopardy!, Sony – who owned the rights to the TV show – decided it would publish the Sega CD version itself. The result is arguably the best video game adaptation of the TV show to date, mainly thanks to the many FMV clips of its legendary host Alex Trebek, who walks onto the set and welcomes you to the game at the start, then continues to talk to you throughout the game, telling you when you're right or wrong. The contestants are all animated with FMV footage too, and all the sound effects and music are lifted directly from the show. There are 'literally thousands upon thousands' of questions in the game, which to be fair could just mean 2,000. ■

FACT

Alex Trebek hosted Jeopardy! from 1984 until his death of pancreatic cancer in 2020, a total of more than 8,200 episodes.

JOE MONTANA'S NFL FOOTBALL

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Malibu Interactive

AS WELL AS the steady stream of American football games starring Joe Montana that Sega released on the Genesis over the years, the Sega CD also received its own take on the genre. The disc-based version boasts a completely new game engine that makes use of sprite scaling to give the illusion of a fully 3D field: this even extends to the ability to view instant replays with a variety of camera angles (including the frankly ridiculous helmet cam, where you're brought right down to ground level and the players are comically pixelated). If things are getting too tough for you, you can call on Joe's help up to three times per match: cue an FMV sequence where he gives some typically vague advice. ■

FACT

If you can manage to win the Super Bowl you'll face off against 10 classic Super Bowl winning teams, dating as far back as the 1967 Packers.

JURASSIC PARK

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

OF THE APPROXIMATELY 12,000 different video games released to tie in with *Jurassic Park*, the Mega CD version is one of the more unique offerings. It's a first-person point and click game (similar to something like Myst) which is set after the events of the movie, rather than an attempt to retell them. You play as a scientist who heads to Jurassic Park with the aim being to collect seven different species of dinosaur egg then get the hell out of there before you become a T-Rex's next bowel movement. The problem is, your helicopter is shot down by a rival group called Biosyn, meaning you have to not only collect the eggs but also deal with Biosyn's thugs while trying to find a different way off the island. ■

FACT

The game was originally supposed to have top-down and side-scrolling sections too, but according to programmer Doug Lanford these were scrapped when it was clear it was getting too big.

KEIO FLYING SQUADRON

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Victor Entertainment

KEIO FLYING SQUADRON is easily among the top 10 best video games with a protagonist wearing a sexy bunny suit. And that's a highly contested category. The game is set in seventeenth century Japan and stars Rami, a teenager (secretly descended from aliens) who has to recover a magical key that was stolen by the evil super-intelligent raccoon Dr Pon while she was hanging out at the supermarket. And if you think a supermarket in seventeenth century Japan was the weirdest thing in that whole sentence, you'd better read it again. Sitting atop her flying dragon Spot, Rami has to make her way through seven stages of side-scrolling shoot 'em up silliness (split up with anime sequences) to defeat Dr Pon and get the key back. ■

FACT

Keio Flying Squadron 2 was developed for the Sega Saturn in 1996. While it didn't get a North American release it did at least make it to Europe.

KIDS ON SITE

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Digital Pictures

THE SEGA CLUB label for children's games wasn't limited to the Genesis in North America: it was also applied to Kids on Site, this slightly strange Digital Pictures game where youngsters get to operate heavy machinery without the risk of an enormous lawsuit and irreparable injury. A trio of wacky construction workers called Bertha, Dizzy and Nuts introduce you to each vehicle – Eddie the Excavator, Billy the Bulldozer, Melvin the Steamroller and Ruby the Wrecking Ball – after which players can control each one by pressing A and C to move left and right, and pressing B to perform its specific action. Each vehicle has a task, be that filling a dump truck with dirt, clearing a pile of junk out of the way or what have you. ■

FACT

Each time you clear a task you're rewarded with a medal. Collect four medals and you get to blow up a building, which is a level of careless mayhem rarely seen in a children's game.

KRIS KROSS: MAKE MY VIDEO

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Digital Pictures

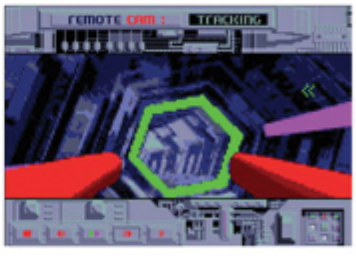
ANOTHER ENTRY IN Digital Pictures' eccentric Make My Video series, this one focuses on Kris Kross, the one-hit wonder duo known for two things: being 13 years old and wearing their clothes back to front (the reason being 'cause inside-out is wiggida wiggida wiggida wack', apparently). Kris Kross: Make My Video thankfully includes 'Jump' – the aforementioned hit – as well as their subsequent singles 'Warm it Up' and 'I Missed the Bus'. As in other games in the series, players have to edit their own music videos on the fly by switching between the official video and stock footage, while also being sure to include specific clips or special effects suggested by the game (this time via people calling into a video request show). ■

FACT

'Jump' was number 1 in the US for eight weeks, keeping the likes of Queen and Red Hot Chili Peppers off the top spot. 'Warm it Up' and 'I Missed the Bus' charted at 13 and 63 respectively.

THE LAWNMOWER MAN

Year 1994
Publisher Time Warner Interactive
Developer Sales Curve



SOMETIMES YOU JUST have to do your best to describe a game and accept that it makes little sense. The Mega CD version of The Lawnmower Man follows on from the events of the movie and has you playing as a cyberspace, liquid-like polygonal version of Pierce Brosnan's character as you take on a series of challenges laid out by the psychotic Cyberjobe. The vast majority of the game is played out using FMV sequences and have you carrying out a seemingly unreleased series of tasks such as flying a ship through some tunnels, jumping across pillars and firing a cannon at an invisible wall to try and find the hole and hit your enemy before they can find it. Look, I don't know. ■

FACT

One of the features claimed on the box is 'stunning interactive ray-traced 3D graphic sequences', so if you think the Xbox Series X and PS5 brought ray-tracing to gaming, guess again.

LETHAL ENFORCERS

Year 1993
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

WHEN YOU'VE GOT an arcade game that specialises in digitised characters played by real people, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the Mega CD port would look significantly better than the Mega Drive one. In reality, the two are indistinguishable side-by-side, meaning there isn't any immediately obvious reason why you'd choose one over the other. As with many Mega CD games, the only real difference is in terms of audio: the speech samples are a little clearer, and the music has been given an overhaul with a CD soundtrack recorded with real instruments. Other than that, there's practically no difference: the game's even bundled with the same blue Justifier light gun, and there's no option to buy it standalone, so if you bought the Mega Drive version first you're stuck with a useless second gun. ■

FACT

If you're wondering 'Why don't you just use the second gun for two-player games?', you can't: you had to order a pink 'Player 2' Justifier directly from Konami, which connects to the blue gun.

LETHAL ENFORCERS II: GUN FIGHTERS

Year 1994
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

IF YOU THINK Konami may have changed its tack when it came to the second Lethal Enforcers game and perhaps added something to make the Mega CD version noticeably different, your optimism is to be rewarded but is sadly unfounded. Once again, this Old West take on the Lethal Enforcers formula is near-identical on both systems with the only changes, as before, being an improved CD-quality soundtrack and slightly clearer audio. That said, at least the latter is slightly more useful this time considering how the enemies are much more talkative, meaning when you hear 'You can't hit the broad side of a barn,' 'Take that, varmint!' or 'You ain't gonna get me, Sheriff!' for the hundredth time at least you can't complain about how scratchy it sounds. ■

FACT

The Japanese version let you play the five stages in any order you wanted. You can trigger (ahem) this in the western (ahem) version by entering the Konami code (with A, B, C instead of B, A) on the title screen.

LINKS: THE CHALLENGE OF GOLF

Year 1994
Publisher Virgin Interactive
Developer Access Software

WHILE THE GENESIS got a console port of World Class Leader Board, the Sega CD instead got Access Software's spiritual successor, Links (the first in what would become a lengthy series of Links games). The game only has one course – the Torrey Pines course in San Diego – but it at least goes to town on it, offering FMV flyovers of all 18 holes ('so realistic you may get airsick', the box lies), commentary by Ben Wright and tips by Australian pro golfer Steve Elkington. The course is made up of a series of 35mm photographs, which helps with realism but does also result in some lengthy load times every time you hit a stroke. At least it's quicker than walking to the ball in real life (though not much). ■

FACT

Links supports the TeeVGolf Club, a quirky third-party device that uses infrared beams to track your swinging motion. You could probably call it the 'fore' father to the Wii Remote (sorry).

LOADSTAR: THE LEGEND OF TULLY BODINE

Year 1994
Publisher Rocket Science Games
Developer Rocket Science Games

ONE OF THE more notoriously poor FMV games released on the Sega CD, Loadstar tells the story of the titular Tully Bodine, a space trucker who's been promised a huge payment if he can get a cargo of contraband camels (yes, really) off the moon. The game mostly consists of a series of FMV sequences designed to give the impression you're driving your space truck, but the player's controls are mainly limited to switching left and right between lanes and occasionally shooting down the odd police drone. Loadstar's developer Rocket Science Games had been heavily invested in by Sega and as such the game – which was much better suited to the PC – suffered huge criticism for its limitations. ■

FACT

Rocket Science's senior designer Brian Moriarty told *Edge* magazine that the game was a failure because most of the team were more interested in breaking into Hollywood, the CEO didn't like games and Sega's testers hated it.

LORDS OF THUNDER

Year 1995
Publisher Sega / Hudson Soft
Developer Hudson Soft / Eleven

THE SIX CONTINENTS of Mistral have been overrun by the Garuda Empire and its leader Sornbul, who wants to resurrect the evil god Deoric and plunge the land into darkness. Playing as Duran – the last descendant of the heroic knight Drak – you have to don your flying armour and travel across Mistral, destroying Sornbul's minions and restoring peace to the land. This side-scrolling shoot 'em up lets you choose the order in which you take on the six main stages, then gives you a final seventh stage once they've all been cleared. Duran has four different armour types to choose from, each giving him a different elemental power. Perhaps the game's most memorable feature, however, is its hard rock soundtrack, which uses the CD capabilities to their fullest. ■

FACT

Lords of Thunder is considered an unofficial sequel to Hudson's TurboGrafx-CD game Gate of Thunder, due to the similar name, genre and developer (even though it's set in space).

LUNAR: THE SILVER STAR

Year 1993
Publisher Working Designs
Developer Game Arts

THIS CULT FAVOURITE RPG is one of the genre's few Sega CD exclusives, and quickly gained a reputation for its high quality plot, soundtrack, video animation and voice acting. It's set in the world of Lunar and follows a 15-year-old lad called Alex who is out exploring with his friends one day when they stumble on a cave containing an ancient dragon called Quark. The dragon tells Alex to become the next Dragonmaster by travelling across Lunar and taking on various trials, but this request takes on more urgency when the world becomes endangered by the evil Magic Emperor. Although the general exploration and turn-based RPG battle system are no different from most games, Lunar's production values and brilliant localisation made it a critical success. ■

FACT

Silver Star was remade no fewer than three times: first on the PlayStation and Saturn as Silver Star Story Complete, then on the GBA as Lunar Legend, then on the PSP as Silver Star Harmony.

LUNAR II: ETERNAL BLUE

Year 1995
Publisher Working Designs
Developer Game Arts

THE SECOND LUNAR game takes place 1,000 years after the events of the first one, so it's safe to say that Alex and his chums don't star in it, on account of being dust. This time you play as Hiro, a similarly young lad who's fascinated by the (now ancient) tales of Alex, and wants to be a hero himself. This soon becomes a possibility when he meets Lucia, a mysterious girl from the faraway Blue Star, who asks him to help her stop the evil Zophar destroying the world. Much like its predecessor, Eternal Blue doesn't do anything to revolutionise the RPG genre, but Working Designs' exceptional localisation (during an era when many games were simply translated and not much more) made it a compelling adventure. ■

FACT

The intro opens with a scene in which a nude Lucia awakens. Although the Japanese version isn't explicit anyway, the westerm version was nevertheless censored to an extent.

MAD DOG MCCREE

Year 1993
Publisher American Laser Games
Developer American Laser Games

AMERICAN LASER GAMES was a New Mexico company that specialised in creating light gun games for arcades that used laserdiscs to show full motion video. Its first game was Mad Dog McCree, which was originally released in 1990 and was extremely popular, not only becoming a regular fixture in arcades but also making a memorable appearance on the UK video game TV show *GamesMaster*. When the Mega CD launched, boasting its full motion video capabilities, it was only a matter of time before this iconic title would mosey on over to Sega's console. It's set in the Old West and puts the player in the cowboy boots of a nameless stranger who enters a town and is quickly approached by an old prospector who asks for help. The mayor and his daughter have been kidnapped by Mad Dog McCree and his outlaw buddies, and the sheriff has been locked up for good measure. There are four

FACT

The game supports a standard Genesis controller, the Menacer or the Sega Mouse. Of the three, the mouse is by far the most accurate.

locations to visit in any order you choose: the Corral, the Saloon, the Sheriff's Office and the Bank. Each of these is swarming with bad guys but also its fair share of innocent folk. Pop some gunpowder into the wrong person or take a bumful of it yourself and you'll have to start the section again. The Sega CD version of Mad Dog McCree is far from the best port available: the video quality is pretty poor, to the extent that some distant enemies are extremely difficult to see. Still, its influence on the FMV genre can't be denied. ■

MAD DOG II: THE LOST GOLD

Year 1994
Publisher American Laser Games
Developer American Laser Games

AMERICAN LASER GAMES followed up Mad Dog McCree with light gun games set in 1930s Chicago and sci-fi settings, but it couldn't resist returning to the Old West. Turns out this time Mad Dog and his boys are searching for a secret sixteenth century Spanish treasure, so it's up to you to chase after him and make sure he doesn't get to it. This time there are three different routes to take, each accompanied by a different partner character, essentially meaning the game requires three playthroughs to see everything it has to offer. Whichever path you choose, the game always ends with a stage set on a train and a final shootout in Mad Dog's hideout, which ALG proudly declared was 'the longest interactive battle ever filmed'. ■

FACT

American Laser Games made one more Old West shooter in 1994 called The Last Bounty Hunter. Although not officially the third in the series, it was included in the Mad Dog McCree Gunslinger Pack on Wii.

MANSION OF HIDDEN SOULS

Year 1994
Publisher Sega / Vic Tokai
Developer System Sacom

KNOWN IN EUROPE as Yumemi Mystery Mansion, Mansion of Hidden Souls is a point and click adventure game which – like so many of its era – consists mainly of pre-rendered backgrounds and FMV video as you move from screen to screen. You play as a young man called Jonathan, who enters the titular mansion in search of his sister Samantha, who was led there by an enchanting glowing butterfly. There are more butterflies inside the house: these are ghosts of dead people (as opposed to ghosts of alive people) who talk to you. Unlike similar titles like Myst, there aren't a lot of puzzles in this game: the focus is more on exploring the mansion and finding certain objects needed to get past obstacles. ■

FACT

The sequel to Mansion of Hidden Souls launched on the Saturn in 1995. The North American version was named… um, The Mansion of Hidden Souls.

MARKO'S MAGIC FOOTBALL

Year 1994
Publisher Domark
Developer Domark

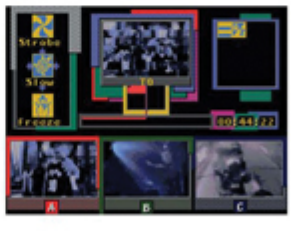
WE'RE PRETTY MUCH at the halfway stage of the Mega CD section of this book, and by now it should be clear that a sizable portion of the console's library consisted of Mega Drive games ported over with very few differences bar an improved CD soundtrack. You may now be wondering which direction this entry is going to go: is Marko's Magic Football the same (other than a handful of odd little animations added in between each level), or is it actually a wildly different game that's practically the opposite of its cartridge counterpart? Sorry to get you worked up, but it's the former again. At least it has the bragging rights of being one of the rarer Europe-only Mega CD games. ■

FACT

Good Deal Games released a North American Sega CD version of Marko's Magic Football in the early 2000s, but it did so without Domark's blessing and the game is considered unauthorised.

MARKY MARK AND THE FUNKY BUNCH: MAKE MY VIDEO

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Digital Pictures



WHAT'S THAT? YOU don't think the Make My Video series is quite '90s enough with INXS and Kris Kross versions? Then how about one based on Marky Mark and the Funky Bunch? The three songs available for your chopping and editing pleasure are 'Good Vibrations', 'I Need Money' and 'You Gotta Believe', and as before you're able to swap the footage for other random stock footage on the fly while adding a bunch of video effects. This time instead of making videos for phone-in callers, you're following a brother and sister who decide to visit a boxer, a bunch of stereotypical 'dudes', their parents and a bunch of teen girls in a bathroom (really) to ask them how to make the best Marky Mark video. ■

FACT

Us older folk already know this but if you're a young buck you may not realise that Marky Mark eventually went on to have a successful film career under his real name, Mark Wahlberg.

THE MASKED RIDER: KAMEN RIDER ZO

Year 1994
Publisher Sega / Toei
Developer Toei

THE KAMEN RIDER series – about a superhero who wears a bug suit and rides a motorbike – has been constantly popular in Japan since its inception in 1971. In 1993 Toei and Bandai released the second Kamen Rider movie, *Kamen Rider ZO*, then made this strange interactive version of it the following year. The game is essentially a cut down version of the film focusing mainly on its action scenes, but rather than simply showing the video the game also asks the player to press the D-Pad in certain directions or press certain buttons to keep the action going. You have a health bar at the bottom of the screen: get enough commands wrong and you'll run out of health, triggering a failure clip and forcing you to redo the scene. ■

FACT

There have been over 100 video games and mobile games that have starred Kamen Rider either as the hero or in a cameo role. That bike clearly helps him get around.

MEGARACE

Year 1993
Publisher Software Toolworks
Developer Cryo Interactive

IF YOU'VE EVER wondered what it would be like racing in the future, it turns out everything's perhaps grainier than you'd expect. MegaRace is set in an unspecified year and sees you taking part in VWBT's most popular TV show, hosted by the rather odd Lance Boyle (who looks a bit like the dad from *ALF* but isn't). There are 15 tracks to race through and the aim is to not only finish first but also use your weapons to wipe your opponents, the Vultures, off the road. Because games of this era somehow weren't considered complete without FMV playing at least some part in proceedings, each track is actually just a video playing in the background, and you're just moving your car left and right to avoid bumping into things. ■

FACT

MegaRace got two sequels, but it wasn't until the third game (the cleverly titled MegaRace 3) that the tracks finally moved from FMV to actual polygonal locations.

MICKEY MANIA: THE TIMELESS ADVENTURES OF MICKEY MOUSE

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Traveller's Tales

WHILE MANY MEGA CD ports of Mega Drive games were underwhelming, Mickey Mania is a good example of how just a few small additions can make all the difference. The game looks and plays just like the cartridge version, and of course there's the obligatory new CD soundtrack. However, Mickey also now has a much wider range of voice samples, commenting on things that appear on the screen and generally giving the game a much greater sense of character. Some stages have also been expanded a little: the final battle with Pete, for example, includes a new section where all the previous Mickeys you encountered in the past all appear to fight together, tying a rather satisfying bow around the whole adventure. ■

FACT

The Mega CD version of Mickey Mania was generally considered to be definitive until it was ported to the PlayStation a couple of years later as Mickey's Wild Adventure, adding a new stage.

MICROCOSM

Year 1994
Publisher Psygnosis
Developer Psygnosis

IF YOU'VE EVER seen the movie *Innerspace* and wondered what it's like flying a tiny spaceship inside a human body, Microcosm does its very best to try and illustrate it. Originally developed by Psygnosis for the Japanese FM Towns computer but also used as a tech demo to showcase the Amiga CD32 back in 1991, Microcosm is a real shooter where you make your way through the body of a benevolent corporate CEO (yes, they exist) and try to blast away the microscopic droids injected into him by a rival corporation. As one of the earliest games to use FMV as a background, Microcosm was a real draw when it first launched. By the time it got to the Mega CD in 1994, though, it wasn't as impressive. ■

FACT

Microcosm was featured on the cover of issue 1 of *Edge* magazine. As one of the earliest examples of a CD-ROM game it became the poster child for the medium's capabilities, but also its limitations.

MIDNIGHT RAIDERS

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Stargate Productions

SOMETIMES YOU CAN'T beat watching a cheesy early '90s action movie… that is, of course, unless you're playing one. Midnight Raiders clearly takes its inspiration from the low-budget cheese of its time, putting you in the role of of a young rookie pilot nicknamed Joker who, along with his teammates Stryer and Sparks, have to rescue a professor who's an expert in nerve gas warfare (while shooting a lot of people along the way). The game is basically one long FMV sequence with targets that occasionally appear and need to be shot. It's split into three 'phases' – flying your Apache helicopter, then infiltrating a factory on foot and rescuing the professor, before hopping into a jeep and getting out of there. ■

FACT

Joker was played by Todd Jensen, who starred in such other classics as Cyborg Cop, Mega Snake and no fewer than three entries in the Operation Delta Force series.

MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Orion Technologies

IT WOULD APPEAR that Sega and Orion Technologies took a look at the Masked Rider game on Mega CD and decided 'we'd like a piece of that', because the Mega CD Power Rangers game plays fairly similarly. It's made up of nine stages covering a total of five episodes from the TV series: 'Day of the Dumpster', 'Green With Evil', 'The Green Candle', 'Crystal of Nightmares' and 'Doomsday'. As each episode's action sequences play out on the screen, players must press the corresponding directions as they appear otherwise the Power Rangers will take damage and eventually lose. There isn't much more to it than that, which is why the game was criticised for its relative lack of interactivity (despite at least featuring the proper, fantastic theme tune). ■

FACT

'Green With Evil' was one of the most important moments in the series: a five-part saga that introduces the Green Ranger. And if that doesn't make your hairs stand on end, you weren't a kid in the mid '90s.

MORTAL KOMBAT

Year 1994
Publisher Arena Entertainment
Developer Probe Entertainment

THE MEGA CD port of Mortal Kombat had a number of improvements but also suffered from a couple of downsides due to the CD format. The game opens with an FMV sequence showing the Mortal Monday commercial that aired on TV (even though the fact you owned the game means it already did its job). All the music and sound samples now sound a lot more like those in the arcade. However, there are loading times between each fight and – worse than that – when you're fighting shapeshifting boss Shang Tsung, every time he morphs into another fighter the game freezes for a few seconds. Humorously, while the Mega Drive version of Mortal Kombat needed a 'blood cheat' code to activate the gore, this one needs a code to turn it off. ■

FACT

Like many Mega CD games, putting the disc into a CD player lets you listen to the soundtrack. There are, however, some unused tracks on there, including remixes and the famous 'Immortals' techno track made for the movie.

MY PAINT: THE ANIMATED PAINT PROGRAM

Year 1993
Publisher Bridgestone Multimedia
Developer Saddleback Graphics

MY PAINT WAS another attempt to replicate the impact of Mario Paint on a Sega console. While it obviously didn't have anywhere near the sales of Nintendo's art package, that's not to say it was completely without merit. With support for the Sega Mouse, the game features a standard selection of paint, brush and fill tools as well as a sizeable colouring book section with over 200 pages covering 10 different themes including vehicles, dinosaurs and farmyard animals. The game also claims to be the first ever animated paint program: players can apply animated stickers to their drawings and use special inks that glow and change colour. There's also a microphone tool you can hold over the stickers and colouring book pages to hear over 1,000 sounds. ■

FACT

Each colouring book theme has its own music. Bizarrely, the music for the rainforest themed pages was performed by Bob Weir from the Grateful Dead.

NBA JAM

Year 1994
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Iguana Entertainment

AS ONE OF the most popular sports games on the Mega Drive, it was obvious that NBA Jam wasn't going to escape the move to CD either. As you'd expect, the soundtrack has been improved dramatically over the cartridge-based version. There are now also a variety of Half-Time Report video clips, rather than the two identical ones you get every game on the Mega Drive. The rosters have been slightly tweaked – most notably with the removal of Charles Barkley for licensing reasons – and a bunch of new hidden characters have been added, including a T-Rex, a Triceratops and a Raptor. For the most part, though, the game looks and plays the same as it did before, meaning it wasn't quite an essential upgrade, just a nice one. ■

FACT

The three secret dinosaur characters were originally in the prototype version of NBA Jam on the SNES, but were ultimately removed. The Mega CD version marks their debut.

NFL FOOTBALL TRIVIA CHALLENGE

Year 1994
Publisher Philips Interactive
Developer CapDisc

IF YOU'RE THE sort of pigskin pro who knows your wishbone formation from your double wing, the NFL Football Trivia Challenge is probably the game for you. Two players each pick their own team and then head to a virtual field where famous commentators Pat Summerall and Tom Brookshier are ready to narrate the 1,500 questions included in the game (in a nice touch, these questions are illustrated with over 1,200 photos and 300 clips). The game plays out like actual American football: each player gets four 'downs' (questions) to travel a set distance, and the quicker they answer questions correctly the further they move. If they get too many wrong they have to 'punt' and pass possession over to the other player. ■

FACT

Despite the box claiming you're up against 'the toughest football minds in the country' and stating support for one or two players, there's no option to play against the CPU.

NFL'S GREATEST: SAN FRANCISCO VS DALLAS 1978–1993

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Park Place Productions

EASILY ONE OF the strangest sports games ever released, NFL's Greatest is a video-themed fantasy match-up where players get to see who would win in a match between the San Francisco 49ers and the Dallas Cowboys if their rosters from all 15 previous seasons were combined. Players choose one of the two teams, choose which current or classic quarterback will play for them, and are then taken to a stadium screen where they simply choose a series of plays that bring up video highlights from old games. If the clip you get is a positive one, you'll move up the field, and if you keep picking good ones you'll eventually score a touchdown. Congratulations, I suppose, even though you didn't really do much. ■

FACT

This game has one of the strangest Easter eggs you'll find: a photo of programmer Russ Patterson staring at a robot with the word 'PROGRAMMING' scribbled on the screen, accompanied by rock music.

NHL '94

Year 1993
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer High Score Productions

MADDEN FANS MAY have gone without a Mega CD version of their favourite game, but players of EA's NHL titles were treated to a disc-based version of arguably the best entry in the series. Naturally, things don't look massively different on the ice, although the crowd noise and organ noises have been drastically improved and sounds more like a real hockey crowd than the basic hiss that you got on the Mega Drive version. The most notable addition, then – other than the largely forgettable FMV intro and the 100 or so video clips also included – is the pre-match summaries which now have audio clips recorded by Ron Barr, who goes into surprisingly detailed breakdowns of the teams and players participating. ■

FACT

The PlayStation 2 version of NHL 06 also included a port of the Mega Drive version of NHL '94, albeit one with the player rosters removed.

NIGHT TRAP

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Digital Pictures

EASILY THE MOST controversial and therefore well-known game released on the Mega CD, Night Trap's notoriety gives the impression it's a far more violent and morally questionable game than the charmingly cheesy FMV trap 'em up it actually is. The game focuses on the Martin family home, where teenagers have been mysteriously disappearing during sleepovers. A special ops team unfortunately named S.C.A.T. (Sega Control Attack Team) has taken control of the Martins' hidden camera and trap system, and you've been put in charge of them to see what's going on. Meanwhile, another group of teens are about to spend the weekend at the Martins', but this time one of them – Kelly, played by Diff'rent Strokes star Dana Plato – is a secret agent working for you. It soon emerges the house is a stomping ground for Augers, a race of disabled vampires who don't have any teeth and have to extract blood from their victims. The aim is to trap the Augers by looking around the house for them, then hitting the B button when they pass over a trap. Making matters more complicated are the Martins themselves, who have the feeling someone's onto them and keep changing the traps' security code, meaning you have to listen in on their conversations to stay on top of things and make sure the traps still work. Night Trap was dismissed by many as just another FMV game at the time, but over the years it's gained newfound respect by some for the way it used the limitations of the medium to create something genuinely entertaining. ■

FACT

In 1993 Nintendo of America president Howard Lincoln told a senate hearing on violent video games that 'Night Trap will never appear on a Nintendo system.' A 25th anniversary edition launched on the Switch in 2019.

NOVASTORM

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Psygnosis

WHEN THE CYBERTECH Corporation created SCARAB – a highly complex artificial intelligence system – it had two aims: to remove the human element from military operations and have it fight wars on the planet's behalf, and to investigate other planets in search of habitable environments to build new colonies on. Unfortunately, SCARAB got a bit too big for its binary boots and, focusing more on the former, decided to wage war on its creator and destroy mankind. You now have to fly the experiment fighter Scavenger 4 through a devastated landscape to find and destroy SCARAB's control centre. Novastorm is another FMV rail shooter similar to Psygnosis's Microcosm, with many of the same pros (impressive scenery) and cons (extremely limited interactivity). ■

FACT

If you absolutely must play Novastorm, the PlayStation version is generally considered the best because it removes the heads-up display from the top and shows the FMV at full screen.

PANIC!

Year 1994
Publisher Sega / Data East
Developer Sega

ONE OF THE stranger games developed by Sega itself, Panic! (known as Switch in Japan) is a comedic cartoon point and click game that initially appears to have no real purpose but is in fact a giant maze where the aim is to make your way through a series of rooms by pressing the correct switches. The problem is, each room has its own differently designed set of switches, none of which have any markings on them (so you have no idea what they do). The result is a comical game of trial and error where the player picks switches at random to see whether they trigger a funny animation, move the player to the next room, or even send them backwards. ■

FACT

The game's box does everything it can to make it clear that this is a game designed for adults, even stressing that it's 'graphic, but not pornographic'. In reality it's a bit cheeky but nothing much more.

PITFALL: THE MAYAN ADVENTURE

Year 1995
Publisher Activision
Developer Activision

ACTIVISION'S PITFALL REBOOT was so heavily praised for its visual detail that a Mega CD version was something of a no-brainer: after all, if it looked that impressive, surely it deserved to sound just as good? Sure enough, the new soundtrack – which Activision claims that Soundelux Media Labs 'recorded deep in the jungles of Central America' – is suitably atmospheric and is a brilliant accompaniment to the game's striking animation work. Rather than simply leaving it at that, Activision also added a bunch of extra levels to the Mega CD version, meaning fans of the series generally consider it the definitive version, especially when you compare it to the underwhelming 32X port, which… well, we'll get to that. ■

FACT

Soundelux's staff were nominated for 51 Academy Awards for sound, winning 22 of them. Its trademark and huge sound effects library was acquired by Sounddogs.com in 2014.

POPFUL MAIL: MAGICAL FANTASY ADVENTURE

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega Falcom / Working Designs

THIS TECHNICALLY IMPRESSIVE platform adventure tells the tale of Mail, an enthusiastic young elf who wants to make her fortune as a bounty hunter but is unfortunately hopeless at it. After failing once again to turn in her nemesis Nuts Cracker, she learns of an even more valuable bounty: a notorious wizard called Muttonhead. As the game progresses Mail is joined by two more characters – apprentice magician Tatt and winged dragon blob thing Gaw – and the player can switch between the three of them at will as they play. The game has light RPG elements: the heroes can equip items and enemies have HP. There's also 150 minutes of voice acting and 20 minutes of video (which is high quality because it's rendered in-game). ■

FACT

Sega Falcom was a merger that didn't last very long. After getting together in 1991, the pair only released a handful of Mega Drive games. It then announced six Mega CD titles, but only Popful Mail was released.

POWER FACTORY FEATURING C+C MUSIC FACTORY

Year 1993
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Digital Pictures

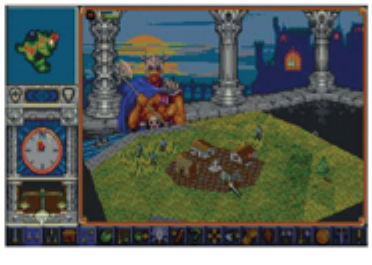
THE FOURTH AND final game in the Make My Video series ditched the branding in favour of pushing the game's strange premise instead (although, as already discussed earlier, a bizarre premise is a common part of each game). This time the game's based on hip house group C+C Music Factory, so naturally the game puts you in a literal music factory, where you work with your friends Dwaye and Franklin to put together video edits to please your evil bosses Mr Wheely Boss and Mr Blackshirt Man. Yes, really. The three C+C songs on offer are 'Gonna Make You Sweat (Everybody Dance Now)', 'Things That Make You Go Hmmm' and 'Here We Go (Let's Rock & Roll)'. They loved their brackets, did C+C. ■

FACT

Franklin is played by Phil Lamarr, who one year later would get a role as Marvin in Pulp Fiction and would eventually voice Hermes in Futurama.

POWERMONGER

Year 1994
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Bullfrog Games



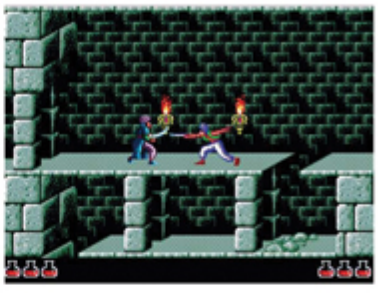
THE MEGA CD version of Powermonger, to its credit, does more than just copy over the Mega Drive version unchanged and slap some FMV clips onto it. Granted, it does do this – each of the 195 islands starts with a brief CGI flyover – but Bullfrog also took time to tweak the game's layout to increase the size of the actual game window, most notably by taking the thick column of icons from the right-hand side and running them along the bottom of the screen, and removing the large info box that also permanently sat there on the Mega Drive game. Despite this, critics were slightly underwhelmed: partly because the game was a year old by this point, and partly because the loading times were among the worst on the Mega CD. ■

FACT

When Powermonger first arrived, magazine ads had quotes from designer Peter Molyneux saying it's 'better than Populous'. Time has suggested that may not have been entirely true.

PRINCE OF PERSIA

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Bits Laboratory



BECAUSE THE MEGA Drive version of Prince of Persia was handled by Tengen and Domark, this Mega CD version doesn't actually have anything to do with it and is instead a completely separate port. As such, it's got a noticeably different art style, which goes more for realism than the slightly cartoon look of Tengen's version (though it could be argued the Mega Drive version looks better). Naturally, the Mega CD game also has a snazzy CD soundtrack – which actually plays throughout, while most other PoP versions have no music in-game – as well as some animated cut-scenes with hilariously bad dubbing. You can even change the speed of your character's animations, which is a literal game-changer for such a notoriously slow-paced game. ■

FACT

If you're trying to perfect your speedruns for Prince of Persia, the Mega CD version keeps track of your best times for each stage.

PRIZE FIGHTER

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Digital Pictures

ANOTHER CURIOUS OFFERING in Digital Pictures' range of full motion video games, Prize Fighter lets you see what it's like to be a heavyweight boxer, from the locker room chat to the ring entrance (including the oddly easy access fans seem to have to you as you're trying to make your way to the ring), and finally to the fight itself. There are four opponents to work your way through – Honeyboy Hernandez, Mega Joe Falco, T. Rex Hawkins and champion Nuke 'The Duke' Johnson – and naturally the fights are a series of FMV clips where said opponents duck, sway and punch while you try to swing at them, hopefully triggering a clip of them being hit in the face. ■

FACT

Prize Fighter was directed by Ron Stein, who was a stunt coordinator on Rocky III. The game box also claims that he created the fight sequences in Raging Bull, but he doesn't seem to appear in the film's credits.

PUGGSY

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Psygnosis

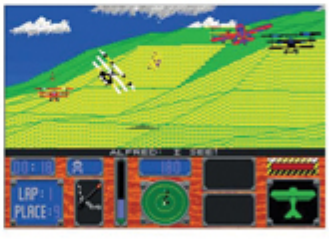
IT ISN'T NECESSARILY a given that when a Mega Drive game is given the Mega CD treatment, the inevitable enhanced soundtrack is automatically a good thing. In the case of Puggsy, which already had an impressive Mega Drive soundtrack to begin with, many of the game's fans believe that the new CD version is actually inferior, not least because it has fewer tracks and repeats some of them later in the game. That aside, the game does include some extra features on the Mega CD, including a number of extra bosses (including one who's essentially a large FMV clip, who you simply have to avoid for a while) and the obligatory FMV intro (which, again, some believe has less character than that of the 'inferior' Mega Drive version). ■

FACT

The Mega CD version still has the copy protection message in its game code (see the Fact for the Mega Drive version), but because the Mega CD had no real copy protection it's never used.

RACING ACES

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega



RACING ACES IS an ambitious Mega CD exclusive that promises 'the ultimate in air combat racing'. Players can choose from 30 different pilots and nine different aircraft split into three categories: Barnstormers (the Fokker, the Spad XIII and the Travel Air Mystery Ship), Warbirds (the P-38 Lightning, the P-51 Mustang and the J7W1 Shinden) and Jets (the F-16, the MiG-29 Fulcrum and the F-23 Black Widow). Naturally, races only contain a single class, otherwise the jets would win every time. There are 40 different courses to race over, and the whole thing sounds extremely impressive on paper. In practice, however, the Mega CD struggles with the polygonal landscapes and the frame rate is poor. This would have really benefited from a port to the Saturn or PlayStation. ■

FACT

The 30 pilots are all either parodies or stereotypes, such as ginger Scot Fiona McTavish, a Canadian called Milo Moosehead and an Italian chap whose quote is 'When I hitta you, I'ma not gonna missa you'.

RADICAL REX

Year 1994
Publisher Activision
Developer Beam Software

IT WOULD BE easy to dismiss the Sega CD version of Radical Rex as the umpteenth Genesis port that changes nothing but the music. Sure enough, the actual game is indistinguishable from the cartridge version and there are no extra stages or anything like that, and the only real difference is the addition of a fancier CD soundtrack. But simply saying 'Okay, next' would be doing a disservice to the new intro sequence, which contains a rap. Not just any rap, but a gloriously terrible rap about Rex himself, with such devastating lyrics as: 'Flying 'cross the world on his mean skateboard / He's the coolest dino-dude who ever scored.' It may not bring anything else new to the table, but this intro alone is about the most '90s thing imaginable. ■

FACT

More lyrics? Why, of course: 'In a burst of fire Rex is on the scene / Packin' one mean flame and an awesome scream.' I don't think the Wu-Tang Clan need worry.

RDF GLOBAL CONFLICT

Year 1994
Publisher Absolute Entertainment
Developer Absolute Entertainment

THE COLD WAR may have ended, but tensions remain in Eastern Europe, with terrorists and 'bush-league despots' (as the game puts it) looking to challenge the US to gain prestige in a collapsed Soviet Union. That's where the RDF (Rapid Deployment Force) comes into play: it's their job to head into potentially flammable situations and snuff them out before they're given a chance to ignite and spread. You play as a member of the RDF and get to control your own M1A2 Abrams Main Battle Tank as you take on various missions in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Alaska. Your tank is armed with a 7.62mm machine gun for rapid fire, a 120mm cannon for powerful shell attacks and laser-guided missiles for those more annoying enemies. ■

FACT

The manual includes a competition to win one of 25 radio-controlled M1A1 Abrams Battle Tanks. This is overshadowed, however, by the terrible pun: 'Enter today – it's our way of saying tanks.'

REVENGE OF THE NINJA

Year 1993
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Wolf Team

REVENGE OF THE Ninja was originally released in Japanese arcades in 1984 as Ninja Hayate, and is basically the Japanese equivalent of Dragon's Lair (right down to the use of a laserdisc for the arcade version). Playing as Hayate, you have to enter the Castle of Evil, avoid its myriad traps and enemies, and reach the Dark Lord Lougi to defeat him and rescue Princess Terri. Just like Dragon's Lair, the entire game is played out using animated video clips (this time created by Toei Animation) but there are two main differences: some of the traps are randomly generated, meaning the game isn't identical every time, and the game also explicitly tells you which buttons to press next (whereas Dragon's Lair expects you to figure it out yourself). ■

FACT

If you beat the game in Hard mode you're shown a certificate showing your score. If players took a photo of this and sent it to Renovation Products, they'd be sent a real paper certificate.

REVENGERS OF VENGEANCE

Year 1994
Publisher Extreme Entertainment
Developer Micronet

DESPITE HAVING ONE of the most ridiculous names in gaming history (in Japan it had the far more sensible title Battle Fantasy), Revengers of Vengeance is an interesting take on the one-on-one fighting genre that incorporates RPG elements. The game's main story mode looks like a basic top-down RPG, where you visit shops to take on jobs (which are shoot 'em up mini-games, because why not) and earn gold, which can in turn be spent on increasing your stats. The aim is to defeat all 10 characters within 200 in-game days, and eventually build your stats until you're powerful enough to take on the evil demon Venum. If all this sounds a bit elaborate for you, there's also a standard arcade-style fighting mode. ■

FACT

If you hold down the buttons A, Z and Y on a six-button controller on the title screen you'll get a secret password screen. Enter AZY for a hidden ball-breaker game. 'AZY' was the game's sole programmer.

RISE OF THE DRAGON

Year 1993
Publisher Sega / Dynamix
Developer Game Arts

THIS WAS THE first point-and-click adventure game by veteran game designer Jeff Tunnell (which he later followed with Heart of China and Willy Beamish). Clearly inspired by *Blade Runner*, the game is set in 2053 LA and has you controlling burned-out ex-cop Blade Hunter (ahem) as he investigates the bizarre, potentially drug-induced murder of the mayor's daughter. Although Rise of the Dragon was originally released on PC, the Sega CD version is considered the definitive one because of the addition of voice acting: Blade himself is voiced by Cam Clarke, better known as Leondardo from the '80s and '90s *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* cartoons (or Kaneda in Akira, or Liquid Snake in the Metal Gear solid series, if you prefer). ■

FACT

The Sega CD version was censored to remove a French kissing scene and some implied sex, but there's still swearing, drug use and prostitution in it, causing the game to get an MA-17 rating.

ROAD AVENGER

Year 1993
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Wolf Team

ANOTHER ANIME STYLE FMV game with animation handled by Toei Animation, Road Avenger asks 'what would Cobra Command be like if it was a car instead of a helicopter?' then decides the answer is 'probably a load of explosions and stuff'. You play as an elite cop with with S.T.O.P. (the Special Task Operations Police), who takes a coastal break with his fiancee. The notorious road terrorists S.C.U.M. (Secret Criminal Underground Movement) though, want revenge for all their pals being imprisoned, and run you off the road, killing your missus. It's time to jump into an unnecessarily expensive sports car and avenge her, mainly by pressing buttons when prompts appear on the screen. That'll learn 'em. ■

FACT

The original Japanese version is called Road Blaster. It's assumed the name was changed in the west to avoid confusion with Atari's RoadBlasters, which was already on the Mega Drive.

ROAD RASH

Year 1995
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer New Level Software

RATHER THAN ANOTHER straight Mega Drive port, the Mega CD version of Road Rash was a sort of halfway house between the Mega Drive trilogy and EA's new and improved Road Rash reboot on the 3DO console. While the 3DO could handle polygonal tracks, the Mega CD couldn't quite manage this: as a result, while the game features a similar menu system and art style to the 3DO game, and uses pre-rendered racer sprites just like those on the 3DO, the tracks are more like those in the Mega Drive games. It does, however, boast a rocking soundtrack featuring artists from A&M Records including Soundgarden, Therapy? and Hammerbox. There are also 25 minutes of FMV footage in there, including two full music videos from Paw and Swervedriver. ■

FACT

Most of the characters in the game were portrayed by development staff. Designer Randy Breen, who plays a cop, owned a yellow Yamaha bike that also featured on the cover of Road Rash II.

ROBO ALESTE

Year 1993
Publisher Tengen
Developer Compile

THE FINAL GAME in the Aleste series, Robo Aleste is set in an alternative version of sixteenth century Japan, where a group of mechanical death machines called the Dennin – also known as Robo Warriors – are being used by an alliance of clans to overthrow Lord Nobunaga's Oda clan. Oda's only hope of survival is Kage, a trusted officer who's been given the keys (or whatever it is they used instead of keys) to Robo Aleste, Oda's own Robo Warrior. All this is an elaborate excuse to chuck you into a vertically-scrolling shoot 'em up where you mow down a bunch of robots over the course of 11 stages by firing a load of throwing knives at them, while picking up other power-ups like lasers and large shuriken. ■

FACT

This was the only Aleste game actually named Aleste in North America. The original launched as Power Strike, the sequel was named MUSHA, and Super Aleste (which kept that name in Europe) was called Space Megaforce.

ROCK PAINTINGS / HOT HITS

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

WHEN THE SEGA CD originally launched in North America in October 1992, it was bundled with this two-disc compilation designed to show off the console's audio CD and CD+G capabilities. Hot Hits: Adventurous New Music was a standard 10-track CD with songs from up and coming artists like Dramarama, They Might Be Giants and Lush. Rock Paintings, however, was a CD+G disc, which meant when played on a compatible CD+G player (like the Sega CD), its 10 tracks – with hits from Jimi Hendrix, Fleetwood Mac, Chris Isaak, Little Feat and Information Society – were accompanied by images designed to bring the songs to life. When the Mega CD came to Europe in 1993, the discs weren't included, which was devastating to Chris Isaak fans. ■

FACT

The CD+G format was created by Warner New Media but ultimately failed to take off, with only around 60 discs released.

SAMURAI SHODOWN

Year 1995
Publisher JVC
Developer Funcom

AT FIRST GLANCE, the Mega CD version of Samurai Shodown looks like yet another case of the Mega Drive version with some improvements, but it's not quite as black and white as that in this instance. The CD port does reinstate all the intro and post-fight cut-scenes that were removed from the cartridge version, the soundtrack is greatly improved, extra background detail has been added, blood appears more frequently when you attack enemies and the annoying red flash that happens after powerful hits is gone. However, it's not without its issues either: the player is only given three continues, as opposed to the infinite continues on the Mega Drive (crucial in SNK fighting games), and loading times are prevalent throughout. ■

FACT

This wasn't the last time Samurai Shodown would grace a Sega console. The third and fourth games launched on the Saturn in Japan, as did Samurai Shodown RPG.

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND

Year 1993
Publisher JVC
Developer LucasArts

ASK ANY FAN of point and click games to name their favourite examples of the genre, and if they don't list Monkey Island (or its sequel) they're outright liars and scoundrels. It stars Guybrush Threepwood, a rather hapless individual who comes to Mêlée Island™ to become a famous pirate, but first has to prove himself by carrying out a series of tasks. Meanwhile, he falls in love with the island's governor, but things go awry when she's kidnapped by the evil ghost pirate LeChuck. Monkey Island's superb sense of humour made it an iconic release, but the same can't be said for the Sega CD port which suffers from constant, lengthy loading times and sadly doesn't have the voice acting other CD versions boast. ■

FACT

LucasArts was planning to bring another point and click game, Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, to the Sega CD, but decided to cancel it, allegedly due to Monkey Island's performance.

SEGA CLASSICS ARCADE COLLECTION

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

AS WONDERFUL AS it may be to receive a couple of music CDs with your new games console, it's probably not too entitled to maybe hope for a game or two bundled in there as well. That's why, along with the Rock Paintings and Hot Hits discs, North American Sega CDs also launched with Sega Classics Arcade Collection included. This compilation CD included four Genesis games, with the apparent theme being that they were all big in arcades too. Um… except for one of them. The games included are Golden Axe, The Revenge of Shinobi, Columns and Streets of Rage, and while they're mostly identical to their cartridge counterparts, there have been some improvements to the sound, which I'll discuss over the page. ■

FACT

The game was included in a double-CD box, along with a copy of Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective (so don't worry, new customers did get an actual new Sega CD game too).

SEGA CLASSICS ARCADE COLLECTION

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

NO, YOU AREN'T seeing double, there were two versions of Sega Classics Arcade Collection. By the time the Mega CD came to Europe it had been decided to sweeten the deal a little further by including a fifth game, Super Monaco GP (this was also added to subsequent Sega CD consoles sold in North America). As with the four-game version, some of the games were given audio tweaks: specifically, Golden Axe had its music replaced with the arcade version's music (playing as CD audio), while both it and Streets of Rage had some of the voice samples – mainly enemy death noises – replaced with far higher quality ones. Columns got a new title screen theme too, because complete silence is seemingly unacceptable on the Mega CD. ■

FACT

Clearly deciding Sherlock Holmes wasn't cutting it, Sega of America put the 5-in-1 version of the game in a different double-CD case, this time with Ecco the Dolphin. Yes, another Genesis game.

SENSIBLE SOCCER

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Sensible Software

GIVEN HOW SIMPLISTIC Sensible Soccer looks, it may have been a strange candidate to get the Mega CD treatment. Still, Sega decided to release it at a budget price of £30 (when other Mega CD games were selling for £45) and fans lapped it up. While on the pitch it's the same old Sensi, the in-game crowd noises have been replaced with real ones that were recorded by the Sensible staff (with a few other stock sounds like Samba drums and the like thrown in to keep things interesting). There are also a series of CGI stadium flyovers that appear before each match. Nothing too revolutionary, then, but Sensible Soccer (released as Championship Soccer '94 in North America) wasn't broken and therefore didn't need fixing. ■

FACT

Uk magazine *Mega Power* gave away a demo CD of Sensible Soccer. Remarkably, it was actually the entire game, with the only twist being that matches lasted 90 seconds.

SEWER SHARK

Year 1992
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Digital Pictures

ONE OF THE best-selling games on the Mega CD, Sewer Shark launched alongside the console and was therefore Digital Pictures' first game on the system. It's another FMV-based game (as is the Digital Pictures way) and has you playing as a rookie 'sewer jockey', who has to keep the sewers clear of mutants to help make sure the idyllic Solar City remains clean. Accompanied by your extremely aggressive co-pilot Ghost (who calls you Dogmeat), you have to shoot as many creatures as you can see while ensuring you follow the arrow prompts to travel down the right tunnels. Make it to the end and you'll get to enjoy the paradise of Solar City for yourself. Maybe best if you have a shower first, though. ■

FACT

Sewer Shark's video footage was directed by John Dykstra, who was the special effects lead on *Star Wars* and co-founded Industrial Light and Magic.

SHADOW OF THE BEAST II

Year 1994
Publisher Psygnosis
Developer Digital Developments

BY THE TIME Shadow of the Beast II came to the Mega CD it had been on the Mega Drive for two years (and its original Amiga version had been out for four). To make up for this, developer Digital Developments did its best to enhance as much of the game as possible. All the backgrounds were made more detailed, the lead character was given a bit of a makeover (he's wearing some armour now instead of just his undies), there's a brand new soundtrack and every character in the game is now voice acted (terribly, but even so). The notoriously high difficulty level was also addressed, with some areas redesigned to give the player a little more of a fighting chance to beat the game. ■

FACT

All the voice acting in the game was recorded by one person: Tim Bentinck, best known as David Archer in the BBC radio series *The Archers*. He's also the 12th Earl of Portland, which is nice.

SHERLOCK HOLMES: CONSULTING DETECTIVE

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer ICOM Simulations

THIS VIDEO HEAVY detective game puts you in the deerstalker hat of the world's most famous detective (no, not Batman) as he solves three separate cases, which can be played in any order: The Mummy's Curse, The Tin Soldier and The Mystified Murderess. Players have to choose which potential interviewees or locations to visit next, with each meeting presented as a video clip. Once they feel they've investigated enough and have a good idea of whodunnit, they can then go in front of the Queen's magistrate and answer a series of questions that explains who the culprit was. Get it right and Holmes and Watson will recap the case. Get it wrong… and well, you've only gone and sullied the name of a legend. Once again, not Batman. ■

FACT

A PC port launched on Steam in 2015, offering much better video quality. Each case is sold separately for a couple of bucks, or you can buy all three at a discount.

SHERLOCK HOLMES: CONSULTING DETECTIVE VOL II

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer ICOM Simulations

A SLOW-PACED CONCEPT like a detective 'em up was a perfect formula for FMV games so a second Sherlock Holmes game was developed post-haste. Vol II played exactly like the first game, with three new cases to crack: the Two Lions (where a pair of circus lions are murdered on the same night as a man called Lyons), The Pilfered Paintings (where two paintings have been stolen from the National Gallery just days before their public exhibition) and The Murdered Munitions Magnate (where a wealthy gun factory owner is murdered, possibly because of secret dodgy dealings with the government). Whereas the first game was released on one disc, this one comes on two: despite this, there's no notable increase in video quality or game length. ■

FACT

A third game was released in 1993, but only for PC and Mac. The three cases were called The Solicitous Solicitor, The Banker's Final Debt and The Thames Murders.

SHINING FORCE CD

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Sonic Software Planning

ALTHOUGH THE NAME may suggest that this is simply a CD-enhanced remake of Shining Force on the Mega Drive, Shining Force CD is actually something more intriguing. It's still a remake, make no mistake, but a remake of two separate spin-off games previously released on the Game Gear, Shining Force Gaiden and Shining Force II: The Sword of Hajya. Both games are introduced by a young girl with a collection of Shining Force story books, and you get to choose which 'story' you want her to read. Naturally, both games have received major audio and visual overhauls, but there are also two bonus 'books' you can unlock, meaning even those who already played through the Game Gear titles have some new content to play here. ■

FACT

Shining Force Gaiden was only released in Japan, while The Sword of Hajya at least made it to North America. This Mega CD remake, then, marked both games' debuts in Europe.

SILPHEED

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Game Arts

SILPHEED BEGAN LIFE as a mid '80s home computer game in Japan, and was a vertically scrolling shoot 'em up that was noted for its tilted perspective that made distant enemies get smaller (like the *Star Wars* opening crawl text, in other words). A straight port seven years later simply wouldn't cut it, so instead Game Arts – who'd created the original version – remade the game for the Mega CD, replacing the ship sprites with polygonal models and replacing the simple starfield background with an FMV background, giving the impression that the player was in the middle of an epic space battle with loads of things going on around them. While it was a fairly standard shooter, then, it gained praise for being one of the system's better-looking games. ■

FACT

Game Arts teamed up with Treasure in 2000 to release a sequel to Silpheed called Silpheed: The Lost Planet. Naturally, there was no FMV in this one: it was all rendered in real-time.

SLAM CITY WITH SCOTTIE PIPPEN

Year 1994
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Digital Pictures

THE BIGGEST GAME on the Mega CD by a country mile, Slam City comes in a box containing a frankly ridiculous four CDs. It's an FMV one-on-one basketball game where you have to take on four opponents with the charming names of Fingers, Juice, Mad Dog and Smash. When you've got the ball, the aim is to move left and right to avoid your opponent then either press A to shoot or B to make a break for the basket. When defending you have to get in front of your opponent and try to steal with C when they try to make a move. Playing well earns you respect points, and if you manage to earn a billion(!) respect points you'll face off against Chicago Bulls star Scottie Pippen. ■

FACT

The game's theme song is called 'Respect', and was recorded by Pippen himself. Let's just say it's not up there with 2Pac's greatest hits.

THE SMURFS

Year 1995
Publisher Infogrames
Developer Virtual Studio

ONE OF THE rarer games on the Mega CD (mint copies can go for many hundreds of pounds), The Smurfs is a port of the already relatively uncommon Mega Drive game released by Infogrames. The game itself is practically unchanged – although at this point in the book you'd probably be surprised if that wasn't the case – and naturally the soundtrack has been enhanced as is the Mega CD norm. It does, however, have a new animated intro explaining the game's plot, although while it shows the Smurfs talking to each other there's no actual voice acting. There's also an animated ending as well, giving you something worthwhile to play for (other than the fact that the game itself is quite an enjoyable and visually pretty platformer, of course). ■

FACT

Another Smurfs game called The Teletransport Smurf was released on PC in 1995, and borrowed some of this game's intro sequence (albeit with voice acting added).

SNATCHER

Year 1994
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami

BEFORE HIDEO KOJIMA gained worldwide recognition for the Metal Gear Solid games, he had already created a masterpiece that to this day continues to go woefully underappreciated. Snatcher is a cyberpunk adventure set in the year 2047, where the world has been rebuilt 50 years after a biological weapon killed off most of humanity. A new terror has arrived: a dangerous group of robots known as Snatchers, who look like humans but actually have Terminator-like endoskeletons underneath their flesh. The Neo Kobe government sets up JUNKER, a special task force made up of detectives whose job is to investigate and hunt down Snatchers while trying to find out more about who's behind them. You play as Gillian Seed, a new JUNKER recruit who has no memory of his past. As you investigate the Snatcher menace, you also find out more about Gillian's background, and the whole thing eventually comes to a head in spectacular fashion. Although its interactivity is limited – the game is essentially a visual novel and the few moments of action are brief lightgun style shooting galleries limited to aiming a cursor on a nine-square grid – the fantastic plot and Kojima's eye for the eccentric and surreal makes it arguably the best game on the Mega CD and a title that has been crying out for a remake ever since it graced our televisions (as has its spiritual successor Policenauts, which to this day has never seen an official English language release). ■

FACT

Snatcher's translator Jeremy Blaustein told a fansite that it 'only sold a couple thousand units at most in the US', adding: 'Where was everyone when [it] came out? Boy, was that embarrassing.'

SONIC CD

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Sonic Team

GIVEN THAT SONIC the Hedgehog was one of the major reasons for the Mega Drive's success, it was only a matter of time before Sonic appeared on the Mega CD in the hope that he would have a similar impact on Sega's expansion hardware. Sonic CD's plot revolves around time travel: once a year the mysterious Little Planet appears in the sky, and is said to contain seven special Time Stones that allow whoever holds them to travel through time. Dr Robotnik hijacks the small planet and wraps chains around it, tethering it to the Earth's surface, then proceeds to try extracting the Time Stones from it. Cue Sonic, who has to head to the Little Planet and stop Robotnik's evil plans. Each stage has four different states: Past, Present, Bad Future and Good Future. Robotnik has travelled to the past and set up a series of large machines that harvest the Little Planet's magical seeds, thereby creating a bad, toxic future. Sonic has to travel to the past (by hitting a Past sign, hitting a high speed and maintaining it for a while) and destroy these machines in order to change the Future stage into a cheery, colourful one. Sonic CD also marks the debut of two popular Sonic characters: Amy Rose (who is portrayed here as Sonic's biggest fan who won't leave him alone), and the merciless Metal Sonic. It must also be noted that its bonus stages – which have Sonic running through 3D stages trying to destroy UFOs – are arguably the best in the series' history. ■

FACT

The North American version replaced the opening theme, ending theme and all the Present and Future music with a new soundtrack by Sega of America in-house musicians. It's generally believed the Japanese and European soundtrack is better.

SOL-FEACE

Year 1992
Publisher Sega
Developer Wolf Team

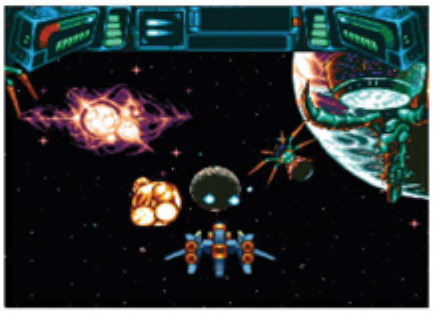
SOL-FEACE WAS THE Mega CD port of Sol-Deace, with the pointless 'D' banished and the game's proper title thankfully reinstated. As well as a new four-minute animated intro and a brief animated ending animation, Sol-Feace obviously gets a new CD soundtrack which is significantly better than that on the Mega Drive. This aside, it isn't massively different from the Mega Drive version. It was bundled as a free game when the Mega CD launched in both North American and Europe, but when it eventually stopped being bundled with them, Sega chose not to publish it as a standalone game. As such, it's one of the few Mega CD games that was never actually sold in the west, despite having been released in both North America and Europe. ■

FACT

The free version of Sol-Feace in Europe didn't come on its own: it was packaged in a 2-in-1 box along with Cobra Command (as well as the five-game Sega Classics Arcade Collection).

SOULSTAR

Year 1994
Publisher Time Warner Interactive
Developer Core Design



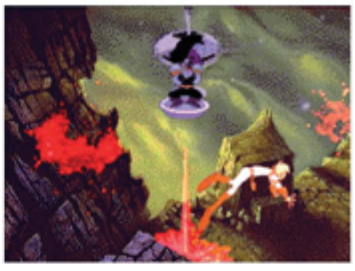
SOULSTAR WAS ANOTHER of Core Design's attempts to get the most out of the Mega CD's sprite scaling functionality to create 3D worlds. You play as Bryk Hammelt, the last of a noble race of warriors called the Cryo-Commandos, and it's your job to destroy the evil Myrkoids and stop them draining planets of their resources. Bryk's ship, the *Aggressor*, has the ability to morph into three different forms: a Strike Craft, a Turbo Copter and a Combat Walker. The game consists of two different play styles: when flying in the Strike Craft the action is on rails, similar to Star Fox (with a similar soundtrack too, incidentally). When the stage has you switching to either the Copter or Walker, meanwhile, you can freely roam around in 360 degrees. ■

FACT

The Star Fox reference perhaps isn't the most accurate: the game's programmer Sarah Jane Avory says her main inspiration was Sega's Galaxy Force II.

SPACE ACE

Year 1994
Publisher Readysoft
Developer Epicenter Interactive



THE SUCCESS OF Dragon's Lair in arcades led to the inevitable follow-up, which arrived the following year. Space Ace was another laserdisc-powered title and was essentially Dragon's Lair with its medieval setting replaced with a sci-fi one. You play as the heroic Dexter (or Ace to his friends) as he tries to stop the evil Commander Buff from turning all of Earth's population into young children with his Infanto Ray so he can take over the world unchallenged. As in Dragon's Lair, the player has to watch the FMV cartoon play out and press up, down, left, right or fire at the right time in order to make the story continue. Failing to do so will trigger a death sequence and the scene will have to be played again. ■

FACT

This wasn't the first Space Ace to be associated with Sega. The company released a mechanical arcade shooting game called Space Ace in the early '60s.

THE SPACE ADVENTURE

Year 1995
Publisher Hudson Soft / Virgin Interacitve
Developer Hudson Soft / T's Music

THE SPACE ADVENTURE is a visual novel based on the Japanese manga and anime series Cobra. Its interesting story follows the titular Cobra, a somewhat rebellious chap who's had his face surgically altered to help avoid his enemies. Cobra has a chance encounter with a young woman called Jane, who has a tattoo of part of a treasure map on her back. It turns out her dad tattooed the rest of the map on Jane's sisters, so Cobra agrees to team up with her and find her two siblings before the evil crime boss Crystal Boy can get the treasure himself. Many have compared The Space Adventure to Snatcher and it's easy to see why, with its similar user interface and futuristic setting. ■

FACT

Cobra started off as a manga series in *Weekly Shonen Jump* magazine in 1978, and lasted until 1984. A 31-episode anime series aired in 1983–83, while a newer 10-episode one launched in 2010.

STARBLADE

Year 1994
Publisher Namco
Developer Namco

THE ARCADE VERSION of Starblade was an important moment in the evolution of space shoot 'em ups. Its impressive polygonal graphics – which were pretty far ahead of their time, all things considered – created an immersive experience for arcade-goers and influenced the 'rail shooter' going forward: the roots of games like Star Fox and Panzer Dragoon can clearly be seen in the game. It was so advanced that when it came to the Mega CD a whole four years later notable concessions still had to be made: enemies became wireframe models, polygonal detail was reduced significantly and the frame rate took a hit. Despite all this, it's still a technical marvel on the Mega CD: which, in a sense, says even more about what the original accomplished. ■

FACT

If you fancy trying out the arcade version of Starblade, it was used as the loading screen mini-game in Tekken 5 on PS2, with the full version available as a hidden unlockable.

STAR WARS CHESS

Year 1994
Publisher Software Toolworks
Developer Software Toolworks

DON'T WORRY, THIS isn't the confusing-looking holographic board game Chewbacca plays with R2-D2 in the original *Star Wars*, but a more traditional version of chess with the pieces replaced by Star Wars characters. Naturally, the white and black pieces are now the Rebel Forces and Dark Side respectively: the pawns are R2-D2s / Stormtroopers, the bishop is C-3PO / Boba Fett, the rook is Yoda / an AT-ST, the knight is Chewie / a Tusken Raider, the queen is Princess Leia / Darth Vader and the king is Luke Skywalker / Emperor Palpatine. When you take a piece an animation plays showing the characters in combat. Despite being an interesting spin-off, the game was criticised by serious chess players for its poor AI, meaning it's perhaps best played by two players. ■

FACT

Hasbro made a real-life *Star Wars* version of chess, but it's probably not as good as this one because the pieces are plastic and you have to make the 'pew pew' noises yourself.

STAR WARS: REBEL ASSAULT

Year 1994
Publisher JVC
Developer LucasArts

IT MAY BE hard to believe given the immense popularity of the franchise and the prevalence of licensed games on practically every other platform but the Mega Drive managed to last its entire life without ever having a single *Star Wars* game released for it. Rebel Assault managed to right that wrong to an extent by allowing Mega Drive owners to get their first taste of a galaxy far, far away… as long as they bought a Mega CD as well, of course. In this FMV-based shooter you play as Rookie One, a young pilot with a suspiciously similar upbringing to Luke Skywalker (a moisture farmer from Tatooine). Most of the game takes place during the events of the original *Star Wars* movie, although it does go to Hoth halfway through, which sort of messes the timeline up a bit.

FACT

The Mega Drive was actually the only Sega system released in the west that didn't receive a *Star Wars* game. The Master System, Game Gear, Mega CD, 32X, Saturn and Dreamcast all got at least one.

After a brief training exercise where you fly over Beggar's Canyon in a T16 Skyhopper, you then play through 14 more missions, where you'll get to experience such joys as flying an X-wing as you try to take out the Empire's Star Destroyer, taking out AT-STs over Tatooine, blasting Imperial Walkers on Hoth, going on foot and taking out Stormtroopers who have attacked a Rebel base, protecting a Rebel transport vehicle in your X-wing, then making your way to the Death Star, zooming through the trench and dropping a torpedo on the exhaust port to blow the whole thing up. It's fairly safe to say this one isn't canon. ■

STELLAR FIRE

Year 1993
Publisher Dynamix
Developer Infinite Laser Dog

IT'S PROBABLY A good job we'll all be dead in the year 2206, because it doesn't sound very fun (apologies if you're reading this in the year 2206. Also, I'm haunting you). A cybernetic race called the Draxon – who have already conquered over 10,000 worlds – have turned their attention to Earth and plan on sapping the planet dry by enslaving all 10 billion of its humans. A squadron of Earth's top fighter pilots were assembled to defeat the Draxon, but they all died except you, so now you've got to take them on all by yourself. The game is a free-roaming, first-person action game where you skim around the surface of five moons (and a final sixth stage), gunning down a bunch of polygonal enemies. ■

FACT

Stellar Fire's intro is narrated by Michael Dorn, better known as Worf from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

SUPREME WARRIOR

Year 1994
Publisher Digital Pictures
Developer Digital Pictures

IF DIGITAL PICTURES was going to try using FMV to make sports games (Slam City), then why not try to do a fighting game too? What's that? Prize Fighter ticked both boxes? Sssshhhh. Supreme Warrior is an FMV martial arts adventure where you've been tasked with taking one half of a magic mask across the country and hiding it in a secret area, before the evil Fang Tu can find it and combine it with the other half to get indescribable power. Along the way you'll get into a total of 11 fights, each of which plays out in FMV with your opponent performing moves and you deciding whether to block, punch or kick. You have a surprisingly wide variety of moves, but the game is quite difficult to play. ■

FACT

Supreme Warrior was filmed entirely in Hong Kong and was a collaboration with the legendary Shaw Brothers studio.

SURGICAL STRIKE

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer The Code Monkeys

IN THE YEAR 1998, the post Gulf War world is pure anarchy. Terrorists live in normal neighbourhoods and can strike without warning. That's why the United Nations have set up Surgical Strike, an elite team of special forces who can head out in groups of four and ride giant hovercrafts down the street, firing missiles at anything and everything that moves. Which seems a bit excessive when you could just raid the guy's house, but anyway. You have to ride your hovercraft through three locations – a desert town, a mountain fortress and an island paradise (ummm) in search of missile silos, armoured tanks and main terrorist Kabul respectively – in what's essentially an FMV shooting gallery where you get to change direction every now and then. ■

FACT

The 32X CD version was so close to being released that that game's box actually states you can claim a free 32X disc. It ultimately didn't happen, and was only released in Brazil.

SYNDICATE

Year 1995
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Bullfrog Games

EASILY ONE OF the rarer Mega CD games only released in Europe, Syndicate was one of the last titles released for the system in the region and as such can easily fetch hundreds of pounds / dollars when buying it these days. That's not to say it's entirely worth it, mind you, unless you're trying to complete the full set. It does have a new soundtrack (because of course it does) but it's quite an accomplished, atmospheric one that suits the tone of the game well, and it also includes the full length intro sequence that was present in the PC version of the game (while the Mega Drive version already had an intro sequence, it was severely cut down). These aside, though, it's identical to the Mega Drive game. ■

FACT

Syndicate programmer Mike Diskett was disappointed that the 2012 reboot was a first-person shooter, so he developed Satellite Reign, a true spiritual successor, which launched on PC in 2015 to positive reviews.

THE TERMINATOR

Year 1993
Publisher Virgin Games
Developer Probe Software

THE MEGA DRIVE adaptation of The Terminator was entertaining enough but it was also extremely short, so a straight Mega CD port would have been a little underwhelming, no matter how good the CD soundtrack or FMV clips were. Thankfully, the Mega CD instead got a completely different, much longer game. While it's still based on the same engine as the cartridge game, it's far more flexible both in terms of the number of weapons Kyle Reese acquires throughout the journey, and the fact he can now aim in all directions instead of just straight ahead. There are now 10 levels compared to the Mega Drive's four, although given how many cops and punks Reese kills, you wonder why they even bothered sending a Terminator back in time. ■

FACT

The fantastically rock-heavy CD soundtrack was composed by Tommy Tallarico, who worked on the music for the likes of Global Gladiators, Aladdin, Cool Spot and Earthworm Jim. At the time of writing he's the president of Intellivision.

THEME PARK

Year 1995
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Bullfrog Games

SOME OTHER CD-BASED versions of Theme Park allowed you to choose one of your rides and select an option to watch a little video clip showing a first-person viewpoint of what it looks like when you're on that ride. It was a nice little touch, but I'm only telling you this for context because the Mega CD version doesn't have these clips. It does have an entertaining FMV intro that introduces the concept of the game with a typically British sense of humour, and the soundtrack has been enhanced over that of the Mega Drive version. Other than this, though, the game is practically identical, making it a bit of an odd halfway house that isn't quite as accomplished as, say, the PlayStation version (which lets you actually walk around your park). ■

FACT

The PlayStation and Saturn got special Japan-only versions of the game called Shin Theme Park, with a lot of the character designs tweaked to better suit Japanese tastes.

THE THIRD WORLD WAR

Year 1994
Publisher Extreme Entertainment
Developer Micronet

THE MEGA CD library is responsible for a lot of surprises but it could be argued that the biggest surprise of them all is that it has a 16-bit strategy game that, amazingly, wasn't actually developed by Koei for once. As the name suggests, The Third World War has you taking charge of one of 16 nations as the world teeters on the brink of another massive global conflict. There are five scenarios to choose from, ranging from the titular WWIII (set in the year 1995) to moments in past like the Cold War. Each selectable nation has their own strengths and weaknesses: Libya's military may be hopeless, for example, but they can use their wealth to fund terrorism. Which is, um, nice. ■

FACT

If ever there was a game cover that would need to be changed for overseas, it's this one. The Japanese cover shows Bill Clinton and Saddam Hussein shaking hands as missiles launch around them.

THUNDERHAWK

Year 1993
Publisher JVC
Developer Core Design

ANOTHER PRIME EXAMPLE of Core's mastery of the Mega CD's sprite scaling and rotation tech, Thunderhawk (or AH-3 Thunderstrike as it was known in North America) is a first-person helicopter sim where you're sent on a variety of combat missions. There are 48 missions in total covering 10 different campaigns, where you'll be headed to the likes of South America, the Panama Canal, Alaska, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and the South China seas. Your chopper is armed with a machine gun, missiles and rockets, and you can switch between them easily with the B button. Despite the relative complexity of flying a helicopter, Thunderhawk was praised for the accessibility of its control system and how easy it is to get stuck in quickly. ■

FACT

According to a preview of Saturn title Thunderhawk 2 in *Mean Machines Sega* magazine, 4 out of every 5 Mega CD owners in the UK owned a copy of Thunderhawk.

TIME GAL

Year 1993
Publisher Renovation Products
Developer Wolf Team

AS THE GENIUS Dr Harper is unveiling his time machine, a chap called Luda suddenly jumps through it, claiming he's going to take over the past and every other time zone so he can rule forever. Luckily, the doc has a second time machine (as you do), so off goes Time Gal to chase after Luda and give him a smack in the chops for getting so cocky. Time Gal is another of Renovation's reaction-based FMV games and, much in the same vein as Ninja Hayate and Road Avenger, has the player pressing up, down, left, right or an action button as prompts appear on the screen. This time, though, the game will occasionally pause and give you a list of written actions you can choose between. ■

FACT

The game's 16 stages are set in various time zones (from 70,000,000 BC to 4001 AD) and appear in a random order each time you play the game.

TOMCAT ALLEY

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer The Code Monkeys

THE GENERAL IDEA of FMV games was that they were like playing a movie, so it's no surprise that some of them feel like they borrow heavily from blockbusters. Tomcat Alley has more than a faint whiff of *Top Gun* about it, as you fly your F-14 Tomcat through seven missions, gunning down enemies. And when I say 'gunning down enemies' I mean that's literally all the player gets to do in this one: you're never actually in control of the plane at any point. Instead, almost all of the game involves looking for enemies, moving a targeting reticule over them and firing before they shoot first. The full-screen video and decent production values still won some players over, but it's not remembered for its depth. ■

FACT

Sega also released the game on Windows PCs under its Sega PC label. This version can be played with a mouse and has noticeably better video quality.

TRIVIAL PURSUIT

Year 1994
Publisher Virgin Games
Developer Western Technologies

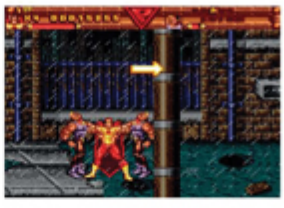
THE WORLD'S MOST popular Canadian board game (sorry, Balderdash) has had more than its fair share of video game adaptations over the years. Trivial Pursuit: Interactive Multimedia Game (to give it its full title) lets players take part in either a full game – board, wedges and all – or a 'fast game' where the categories are chosen at random and players simply keep answering questions until they've guessed one of each. The game is packed with photos, video clips and soundbytes, making it one of the more entertaining 16-bit trivia games. There's a bit of an honour system involved, though: instead of multiple choice or typing in your answer, the game simply makes you guess the answer, then tells you what it was and asks if you were correct. ■

FACT

There have been many Trivial Pursuit special editions, each with their own bespoke questions. These include several Disney and *Star Wars* sets, a Manchester United one and even one about country music.

ULTRAVERSE PRIME / MICROCOSM

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Malibu Interactive / Psygnosis



THIS TWO-PACK CONTAINS Microcosm (which is already covered earlier in this section) and Ultraverse Prime, a beat 'em up based on the *Prime* series of comic books released under Malibu Comics' Ultraverse imprint. Prime is a 13-year-old boy called Kevin Green who can transform into a huge adult superhero (by which I mean an older one, not anything dodgy). The thing is, only his body changes: his 13-year-old mind remains as inexperienced as ever, putting him in some sticky situations. Most of the game is a beat 'em up in the same vein as the Spider-Man and Venom titles, but you'll also encounter the occasional flying stage where Prime takes on enemies in the air at high speed. Ultraverse Prime was never released as a standalone game. ■

FACT

In a neat touch, the disc also contains every page of the first 15 issues of the *Prime* comic (albeit in very low resolution), plus an FMV documentary about the making of the comic.

VAY

Year 1994
Publisher Working Designs
Developer Hertz

A THOUSAND YEARS ago, a huge war in space got out of hand and a massive AI killing machine crash-landed on the primitive planet of Vay. With nothing like this technology at hand to defeat it, Vay's five strongest wizards all joined forces to stop it, sealing its power into five orbs and spreading them throughout the land. Fast forward to the present and the evil Danek Empire has created a bunch of robots that gatecrash Prince Sandor's wedding and capture his bride-to-be. It's up to the Prince – in this conventional but well-written RPG – to wander around Vay in search of the five orbs so he can resurrect the enormous mechanical death-bot and use it to destroy the Danek Empire's poxy little droids. ■

FACT

As in Lunar, Working Designs' localisation team used a page of the manual to explain how the game had been localised for the west, and even apologise for the odd audio sync issue.

WHEEL OF FORTUNE

Year 1994
Publisher Sony Imagesoft
Developer Absolute Entertainment

AS WITH THE Sega CD version of Jeopardy!, Sony decided to take back the rights for its other top game show *Wheel of Fortune* and, rather than getting GameTek to make another port, made its own completely unique CD-based version. Much of Sony's take on Wheel of Fortune is similar to its Jeopardy! game: all the contestants are real people whose actions are FMV clips, the show's real music and sound effects are present, and the show's host is here in digitised form too. Well, sort of. Whereas the actual main host Pat Sajak is nowhere to be seen, assistant and legendary letter-turner Vanna White is promoted to taking on hosting duties. It's clearly affected her willingness to turn the letters over too: here she just walks past them as they change. ■

FACT

In case it's annoying you, the answer in the screenshot is Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

WHO SHOT JOHNNY ROCK?

Year 1994
Publisher American Laser Games
Developer American Laser Games

THE SECOND MOST popular piece of media with a 'Who Shot JR' theme, this light gun offering from Mad Dog McCree studio American Laser Games is a parody of crime movies set in the '30s and has the player taking on the role of a private dick who's trying to find out who killed the titular Mr Rock, a singer at a local nightclub. You have to shoot your way through a pool hall, casino, warehouse and garage to find and defeat four suspects, each of whom gives you a clue that can be used to figure out the combination for a safe which in turn leads to the killer. The Mega CD version suffers from extremely low video quality, making it hard to pick out some enemies. ■

FACT

Who Shot Johnny Rock? was released on DVD in 2001. While the picture quality is fantastic, playing with a DVD remote is significantly less so.

WILD WOODY

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

OKAY, STOP SNIGGERING, he's a pencil. A pencil belonging to an archaeologist called Dusty, to be precise, and when Dusty leaves an exotic totem pole on his desk one night it comes to life, its different heads all entering various drawings in Dusty's office and creating portals to new worlds. The remaining totem head brings Dusty's pencil to life and asks him to enter each world to get the other heads back. In this quirky platformer, Woody's main method of attack is jumping onto enemies and using the eraser on his bum to erase them from existence. Along the way he can also collect sketches of bombs, ghosts, hurricanes and the like: these can be stored and 'drawn' onto the screen, bringing them to life to help him. ■

FACT

There's an extremely elaborate Easter egg that involves activating a debug cheat code and moving Woody to a bunch of hidden areas in one stage, with the result being that the mermaid sketch is topless.

WING COMMANDER

Year 1993
Publisher Sega
Developer Origin Systems

CONSIDERED ONE OF the most iconic sci-fi flight sim series of all time, Wing Commander made its debut on PC in 1990 before coming to the Sega CD a few years later. As one of the top pilots of the Terran Confederation, your task is to climb into your Hornet, Scimitar, Rapier or Raptor ship and take on 40 missions as you try to stop an evil feline alien race called the Kilrathi Empire from taking over your strike carrier, the TCS *Tiger's Claw*. While this wasn't the first console version of Wing Commander – it came to the SNES first – the Sega CD version's sprite rotation trickery and its copious voice acting made it arguably the best port on consoles at the time. ■

FACT

The fifth and final main game in the series was Wing Commander: Prophecy on PC in 1997. At the time of writing, a 16-player online dogfighting spin-off on Xbox 360 called Wing Commander Arena was the last release, in 2007.

WIREHEAD

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer The Code Monkeys

ONE OF THE most random and yet most entertaining examples of the interactive movie genre, Wirehead tells the story of Ned Hubbard, a mild-mannered history teacher who gets a computer chip implanted into his brain after an accident. A mad scientist wants to dissect Ned's head to find out more about this chip so he sends some goons to Ned's house. The twist is that you're in control of the chip, and use your controller to give Ned one of five actions: move left, go straight, move right, punch or kick. Every few seconds you'll be given a choice of some of these (depending on the situation) and have to enter your choice quickly to see what happens. It's basically a Choose Your Own Adventure story at high speed. ■

FACT

Ned was played by Steve Witting. Fans of *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia* will know him better as Wally, the neighbour in the 'Mac and Dennis Move to the Suburbs' episode in season 11.

WOLFCHILD

Year 1992
Publisher JVC
Developer Core Design

ANYONE WHO SIMPLY plays the Mega CD version of Wolfchild for a few minutes would probably come to the same conclusion that's reached for a lot of games that are available on both CD and cartridge: they look and play identical, but the CD version has new music and a new intro sequence. While both of these are true, it turns out there's more to it than this. From the second level on, Wolfchild's stages are noticeably longer on the Mega CD, lending the game an almost 'director's cut' feeling if you're used to the Mega Drive version. When Saul turns into a wolf and can shoot fireblasts at his enemies, he can also fire them continuously here (rather than one at a time on the Mega Drive). ■

FACT

The Mega CD version has a cheat code (A, B, A, C, A, B) that makes a sound: you can then hit various button combinations to go to different levels. The Mega Drive version has the same code and sound, but doesn't do anything.

WONDER DOG

Year 1992
Publisher JVC
Developer Core Design

THE SHEER QUANTITY of animal mascot platformers in the '90s meant that even games that were generally pretty decent struggled to stand out in the crowd. Wonder Dog is one such game: it offered a perfectly competent platforming experience but rarely features in top 10 lists. You play as a young pup from the planet K-9 who's been injected with a special 'wonder serum' that turns him into a superhero. When K-9 was invaded by the evil Pitbullies and their space armada, scientists sent Wonder Dog to Earth to help him escape and build his skills. Now you've got to help him get home and save the day by making your way through eight worlds with bog-standard but entirely satisfying running and jumping actions. ■

FACT

Wonder Dog was available in a green box and a much rarer red one. After years of discussion among collectors it's generally believed the game launched in the red box first in very limited numbers.

WORLD CUP USA '94

Year 1994
Publisher US Gold
Developer Tiertex

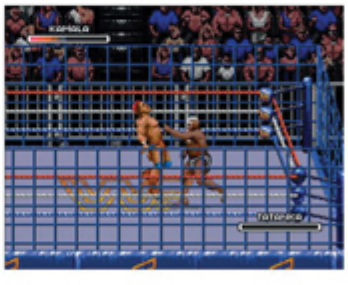
THE OFFICIAL GAME of the USA World Cup was no great shakes regardless of what format it was on due to the presence of games like FIFA, International Superstar Soccer and Sensible Soccer, but the Mega CD version at least included one or two extra goodies that made it a little more entertaining. Along with licensed music by German rock band Scorpions, there are also CGI video fly-bys of all nine stadiums (complete with information on their cities and how they're related to football), as well as a little World Cup trivia mini-game where two players compete to answer questions correctly to push the ball up the pitch and score. The actual football gameplay is essentially unchanged, but the overall package is more impressive. ■

FACT

Scorpions are best known for their 1991 song 'Wind of Change', which sold 14 million copies and is the best-selling single by a German artist.

WWF RAGE IN THE CAGE

Year 1993
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Sculptured Software



A FEW MONTHS after the release of WWF Royal Rumble on the SNES and Mega Drive, Acclaim published this spin-off of sorts designed exclusively for the Mega CD. While the game engine and graphics are identical to those in Royal Rumble, the obvious addition is the ability to play steel cage matches. The character select screen also lets you play a video clip of each wrestler's finishing move, and before each match they're introduced by ring announcer Howard Finkel before shouting a little soundbyte at their enemy ('this now is your epitaph: he dared step into the ring with The Undertaker, rest in peace'). There are 20 superstars to choose from with the likes of the Big Boss Man, Tatanka and Kamala making their series debuts. ■

FACT

Although there are three tag teams in the game (the Headshrinkers, the Nasty Boys and Money Inc), there are no tag team modes, despite the previous SNES and Mega Drive games having them.

BONUS SECTION 2

THE 32X ENCYCLOPEDIA

Even the best consoles don't stay on top forever. Eventually new technology will come along and what used to look cutting-edge starts to appear quite tame by comparison. That's what started happening to the Mega Drive when more powerful systems started arriving. The Atari Jaguar launched in 1993 and, while ultimately a flop, still stirred things up by offering 64-bit hardware with games – like Alien vs Predator and Tempest 2000 – that looked and ran significantly more impressively than anything the Mega Drive had to offer. Meanwhile, the Panasonic 3DO (another flop, incidentally), which was also released in 1993, made the Mega CD look outdated with its extremely fast processor and its ability to produce impressive polygonal graphics.

It was clear that the Mega Drive was on borrowed time, and that it was time for Sega to start preparing for its next generation console. Three new projects went into development: Project Mars, Project Saturn and Project Neptune. Project Mars, which was to be created at Sega of America, was another hardware expansion for the Mega Drive that would boost its processor up to 32-bit and let it handle texture-mapped polygons. Project Saturn, meanwhile, was to be developed at Sega of Japan and would be the company's next 'proper' console, a standalone 32-bit system that would play both cartridges and CDs. Finally, Project Jupiter was to be a cheaper version of the Saturn that would only play cartridges (when the plan for cartridge support on the Saturn was dropped, so too was the Jupiter).

Sega of Japan officially revealed Project Saturn at the Consumer Electronics Show in January 1994 in the form of some brief demos of what would eventually become Panzer Dragoon, Clockwork Knight and Victory Goal. The hype started to build, and magazines began discussing what the Saturn was going to be capable of. And then, just five months later, Sega of America hosted its own event called Sega Gamer's Day, where it revealed Project Mars, now renamed the 32X. It would plug into the cartridge slot of the Mega Drive / Genesis and allow it to run 32-bit games.

While the announcement was generally positive, the fact that Sega was working on two separate pieces of 32-bit hardware confused the press and gamers alike. The 32X launched in North America on 21 November 1994 at a price of $159, which was all well and good, but the fact that the Saturn literally launched in Japan the very next day suggested that this new 32X hardware – which was clearly designed as a stopgap until the main event arrived – may become outdated much quicker than was being suggested. As a result, new 32X software announcements were fairly thin on the ground as publishers decided it was probably best to hold fire and prepare Saturn games instead. By the time the add-on arrived in Europe in January 1995 people were already looking beyond it at what was inevitably coming next.

Sure enough, Sega of America shocked everyone at the E3 trade show in May 1995 when it announced that, surprise, the Saturn was out NOW, causing mass chaos among gamers and mass outrage from many retailers who had no idea this was coming and subsequently fell out with Sega (KB Toys even dropped all upcoming Sega products from its lineups). The 32X, which was already struggling as it was, essentially became obsolete after six months, selling a total of around 800,000 units (and even then, the price had to

be dropped to $99 and then a ridiculous $19.95 before all the stock was sold off).

Given what it was capable of, the 32X did actually have a lot of promise. The problem was, Sega essentially sent it out to die by announcing it after its next-gen system had already been announced, then releasing that next-gen system much earlier than expected. A total of 39 games were released for the 32X in the west: you can find them all in this third and final section of the book.

AFTER BURNER COMPLETE

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

ONE OF THE potential benefits of the 32X's power was its ability to produce more accurate ports of Sega's arcade games than had been seen in the past. While titles like After Burner II and Space Harrier II were released on the Mega Drive, a number of concessions had to be made to account for the fact that, for example, the console couldn't handle the high-speed sprite scaling features of the arcade originals. After Burner Complete (simply After Burner in North America) is a near-faithful rendition of After Burner II, sprite scaling and all, making it the most accurate port up to that point. The only major difference is a drop in frame rate: while the arcade game ran at 60 frames per second, this instead runs at 30. ■

FACT

A practically arcade perfect port finally launched on the Sega Saturn the following year, as part of the Sega Ages collection.

BC RACERS

Year 1995
Publisher US Gold
Developer Core Design

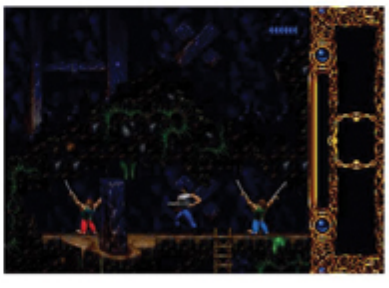
CORE DESIGN WAS one of the most prolific developers for the Mega CD, so it stands to reason that it would try its hand at making 32X games as well. Ultimately, though, it only developed one game for the system: another version of BC Racers, which it had previously released in CD form. Put the Mega CD and 32X versions of the game side-by-side and it appears the 32X version has the edge and then some: the frame rate and draw distance are significantly improved, and the game runs at a higher resolution. Despite this, however, some claim the Mega CD version is still a better game, because the 32X port suffers from extremely twitchy controls, making it less fun to play as a result. ■

FACT

Core had planned three more games for the 32X: a racing game called Fractal Racer, a port of Mega CD title Soul Star and a golf game called Virtual Golf. The latter ended up on the Saturn.

BLACKTHORNE

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Blizzard / Paradox Development



BLACKTHORNE MADE ITS debut on the SNES and PC in 1994 and its original publisher Interplay had intended to bring it to the Genesis too, but ultimately decided to hold fire and make a 32X version instead. It's a 2D cinematic platformer that uses rotoscoped animation in the same style as Prince of Persia or Flashback, which makes the game lovely to look at but tricky to control. To the developer's credit, the 32X port of Blackthorne isn't a straight lift of the SNES version: all the character sprites were replaced with pre-rendered ones, there's a new snow-covered area to explore and almost all of the blood that was in the PC version (but cut out of the SNES one) is intact here too. ■

FACT

The Lost Vikings have a secret cameo exclusive to the 32X version. At one point in the winter stage you'll bump into them, at which point they'll declare: 'We're lost!'

BRUTAL UNLEASHED: ABOVE THE CLAW

Year 1995
Publisher GameTek
Developer GameTek

IT'S HARD TO perfectly define Brutal Unleashed, but the best way is 'an update that wants to be a sequel'. In terms of plot, the game claims to be set four years after the event of the Genesis and Sega CD game Brutal: Paws of Fury and apparently involves a separate tournament, so in that sense it's a separate game. In reality, though, it's more of an update with improved character detail and backgrounds, the addition of two new characters (a mole called Chung Poe and a cat called Psycho Kitty) and a new multiplayer 'strategy' mode where you pick three fighters and move them around a map. In the world of Brutal, then, this is probably the equivalent of Super Street Fighter II. ■

FACT

Each of the eight main characters in the first Brutal represented the Noble Eightfold Path, eight Buddhist practices that can end suffering. Then they added more characters and literally had to write new Buddhist practices.

CORPSE KILLER

Year 1995
Publisher Digital Pictures
Developer Digital Pictures

ONE OF THE benefits of the 32X was that it could be combined with a Mega CD to create the Mega CD 32X (or Sega CD 32X, if you were living in North America), a massive three-part system that could read CD games through through the Mega CD, but then use the 32X's extra power for increased picture quality. Only six games were released for the Mega CD 32X, all of which were FMV games. Corpse Killer was the first of these, and plays practically the same as the Mega CD version, with the obvious difference being that the video quality has been increased, both in terms of clarity and colour. Whether that difference was worth owning two add-ons for, was up for debate. ■

FACT

If you fancy playing Corpse Killer with much better video quality (and who wouldn't), a 25th Anniversary edition is available on PS4, Switch and PC.

COSMIC CARNAGE

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Givro

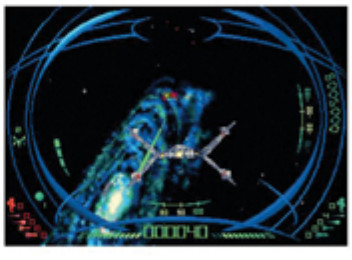
DESPITE THE NAME implying some sort of sci-fi shoot 'em up, Cosmic Carnage is actually a one-on-one fighting game set on a prison ship in space. After a jailbreak leads to the ship's life support systems being destroyed, it soon becomes clear that there's only one escape pod left and eight potential candidates (four prisoners and four soldiers). Naturally, this results in a Street Fighter style process where you choose one of the eight characters and fight your way through the rest one at a time until they're all beaten and you get to escape to freedom. The twist is that if you don't beat them quickly enough you get a bad ending showing the ship exploding with you on board anyway. It never rains but it pours, eh? ■

FACT

The soldiers' looks were modified heavily for the west. In Japan three of them looked like normal humans, but they were changed to a red ant, a shadow figure and some sort of fire-headed woman.

DARXIDE

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Frontier Developments



AS THE LAST 32X game released in Europe, Darxide was strong evidence that the 32X had a lot more to offer if only it had been given a chance to show what it was capable of. It's a visually impressive space shooter where you play as the pilot of a space fighter attempting to stop an alien fleet attacking Earth by engaging them in the small Darxide star system that lies between your planet and theirs. The game was partly designed by David Braben, who was best known for space exploration game Elite, but while his influence clearly shows, Darxide is a much more linear experience, with 10 distinct missions that must be cleared to repel the alien scum. I mean, I'm assuming they're scum, they might just be misunderstood. ■

FACT

As one of only two 32X games exclusive to Europe, and the last game released for the system in Europe (at which point the system's fate was sealed), Darxide can be very expensive to buy these days.

DOOM

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer iD Software

WHEN IT FIRST launched on PC in December 1993, Doom completely revolutionised the first-person shooter, essentially re-laying the genre's foundations for decades to come. Although these days the game is infamous for being playable on practically every device known to man, the 32X was actually the first system to get an official Doom port, handled directly by programmer John Carmack. Although it's a fairly faithful conversion the 32X version does make some concessions. The biggest of these is that only two of the PC game's three episodes are featured here, bringing the total stage count to 17 (one of the episode 2 stages was also removed). This also means the game is missing the iconic BFG9000 weapon, which doesn't appear until the third chapter. ■

FACT

The BFG9000 originally stood for Big F***ing Gun, but when the questionable 2005 *Doom* movie was released this was changed to Bio Force Gun.

FAHRENHEIT

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega Studios

ANOTHER OF THE six games that got the Sega CD 32X treatment, Fahrenheit's use of not only full-motion video but also full-screen video meant that it was a perfect candidate to receive the improved video quality that came with combining both the Sega CD and the 32X. Whereas the other CD 32X games were sold as separate releases from the standard Sega CD versions, however, Fahrenheit is unique in that it's the only game that was released with both Sega CD and CD 32X versions in one package, meaning it's the only Genesis-era release that worked on two different formats. In Europe, however, Fahrenheit was launched as a standalone Mega CD game, with no Mega CD 32X version released. There's a joke in there about a sick burn, but let's not. ■

FACT

Three of the four stunt performers who played your firefighter colleagues in the game went on to do stunts in the 2014 Robocop reboot. Only one of them, though, can claim their Fahrenheit character was named 'Stinky' Stinkowski.

FIFA SOCCER 96

Year 1995
Publisher EA Sports
Developer Extended Play Productions

THE THIRD MAIN FIFA entry marked the turning point for the series, at least on other consoles. While the Mega Drive simply received an upgraded version of FIFA 95, the likes of the PlayStation, Saturn and PC instead got full 3D arenas using what EA had dubbed 'Virtual Stadium' technology. The 32X version lies somewhere in the middle: while it could clearly never match the quality of what the PlayStation and Saturn were offering, EA still went the extra mile to ensure that the 32X game did have a 3D stadium, complete with a variety of camera angles. That said, it still played similarly to the Mega Drive game, meaning the overall experience was like playing the 16-bit versions with 32-bit quality visuals. ■

FACT

FIFA 96 and Darxide were the only two 32X games exclusive to Europe. Whereas Darxide is extremely rare, the fact that football games generally sold well in Europe means FIFA 96, while still very rare, is a little easier to find.

GOLF MAGAZINE: 36 GREAT HOLES STARRING FRED COUPLES

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Flashpoint Productions

WHEREAS MOST GOLF games tend to offer a selection of complete 18-hole courses. 36 Great Holes goes down a different route. As the name suggests, it instead gives the player 36 of former PGA world number one Fred Couples' favourite holes from across America (golf holes, obviously, not the Grand Canyon or anything). As such the game can technically boast that it features 27 different courses, including the likes of Poppy Hills Golf Course in California, the Half Moon Bay Golf Links in San Francisco, Disney's Eagle Pines course and arguably the best-named course in all of golf, the Otesaga Leatherstocking Golf Course in Cooperstown. The fact that each course is only represented by one or two holes lends the game more variety than most other golf titles. ■

FACT

The game launched too early to include the 17th at TPC Sawgrass, a par 3 hole where, in 1999, Couples famously got a 'hole in three' by teeing off into a water hazard then teeing off again straight into the hole.

KNUCKLES' CHAOTIX

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Sonic Team

THE 32X'S SHORT lifespan meant it was the only Sega system released in the west that didn't have a Sonic game. The next best thing was Chaotix, a spin-off that instead starred Knuckles and a bunch of new playable chums: Vector the Crocodile (who can climb walls), Mighty the Armadillo (who can wall-jump), Charmy Bee (who can fly) and Espio the Chameleon (who can run up walls and ceilings. The most important (and divisive) game mechanic, however, is 'Ring Power': your character is always accompanied by a partner, and the two are permanently joined by a 'ring bond' which essentially works like an elastic band. While this can lead to some interesting team moves, many criticised the way it quite literally held players back at times: criminal for a Sonic game. ■

FACT

An early Chaotix prototype named Sonic Crackers was leaked back in 1995. It starred Sonic and Tails instead of Knuckles but its basic title screen made many assume it was a hoax, until it was verified years later.

KOLIBRI

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Novotrade

THIS RATHER ATTRACTIVE free-roaming shoot 'em up was designed exclusively for the 32X by Ed Annunziata, best known as the creator of the Ecco the Dolphin games (so that explains why it looks so good). You play as the titular Kolibri, a hummingbird who's been infused with the power of an ancient crystal that landed on Earth aeons ago and is powering all of the planet's life. The problem is, the crystal's evil twin has crash-landed on Earth after millions of years floating through space, and now it's spreading its darkness everywhere, turning all of Earth's lifeforms into cancerous growths. It's up to Kolibri to leave his home meadow and destroy the mutated lifeforms infesting the Earth so he can ultimately end the dark crystal's evil. ■

FACT

Ed Annunziata created a colouring book called *Coloring Kolibri*, which illustrates the story of the game. Although it's never been physically released, he occasionally shares pages on Twitter.

METAL HEAD

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

WHILE MANY 32X games used polygons in some way or another (such as enemies in some of the space shooters), Metal Head is particularly impressive in that its entire environment consists of texture-mapped polygons. It's a mech simulation played from a first-person perspective in which you play as a member of a special forces team fighting on behalf of the World Federation (which is essentially the UN). Terrorists have decided they don't really like the Federation too much and have decided to defy them by taking over a country with their mechs, so you jump into one of the Federation's own mechs – the titular Metal Heads – and head out to pump them full of rockets. Or lasers or your machine gun: whatever works, really. ■

FACT

Throughout the game your teammates talk to you, accompanied by their portraits.You can choose between either photos or illustrations for these portraits, but a cheat also lets you show them in anime form.

MORTAL KOMBAT II

Year 1994
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Probe Entertainment

THE MEGA DRIVE version of Mortal Kombat II had to undergo some tweaks in order to get the game running properly. Its colour palette was reduced, some of the voice samples were removed, the sound effects were compressed and the soundtrack was replaced with a more Mega Drive friendly one. This 32X port fixed at least some of these concessions: while it still wasn't arcade-perfect, the palette was much closer to that of the coin-op version, some of the missing voice samples were reinstated and the quality of the sound effects was improved. What it didn't do, however, was replace that Mega Drive soundtrack: it remained intact, to the disappointment of some fans. A more authentic port, then, but still not quite arcade perfect. ■

FACT

Brian Glynn portrayed Shao Khan in the game. The problem was, Shao Khan was a huge boss and Glynn was shorter than almost everyone else so his sprites had to be tweaked.

MOTOCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Artech Studios

THE 32X MAY have had a fancy version of Virtua Racing (see later entry) but other than Core's port of BC Racers it was otherwise lacking in the racing department. It was up to Motocross Championship to fill that hole, then, but sadly many consider the resulting game slightly lacking (others consider it the worst game on the 32X, which seems a bit much). Players can choose from three different types of bikes and race on 12 tracks against 12 other opponents, but the game's manual boasts that it contains all manner of terrain features including hairpin turns, mountainous double and triple jumps, tabletops and whoop-dee-doos, but ultimately it seems that the biggest 'whoop-dee-doo' came from those who played the game. ■

FACT

Artech was formed in 1982 and lasted until 2011, when it shut its doors shortly after making PS3 and Xbox 360 puzzle game The UnderGarden.

NBA JAM TOURNAMENT EDITION

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Iguana Entertainment

THE MEGA DRIVE version of NBA Jam Tournament Edition is perfectly entertaining in its own right, but put it side-by-side next to the arcade game and it was clear that Sega's console couldn't quite turn in the same level of detail. The 32X doesn't either, but it at least comes a lot closer, mainly thanks to two new additions: the inclusion of real player heads (rather than the generic faces every player has in the Mega Drive version), and sprite scaling. Whereas in the 16-bit version your players are the same size wherever they stand on the court, on the 32X if you run to the back of the court your players get smaller and if you run to the front they get larger. ■

FACT

Developer Mark Turmell claims the arcade version is haunted. He told ESPN that shortly after NBA player Drazen Petrovic was killed in a car crash, his arcade version started randomly shouting 'Petrovic!'

NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer IGS Games

AS THE ONLY American football game on the Mega CD, NFL Quarterback Club had a lot to live up to. Put it next to the Mega Drive version and you can tell that the visuals have been enhanced slightly, most notably on the field itself, which has been tilted back a tad to show you more of what's up ahead. The sound samples have also been made clearer, and the general gameplay has been tweaked to make it more fun to play. One surprising omission, however, is the QB Challenge mode from the Mega Drive version, where players could choose one of the game's 19 real-life quarterbacks and put them through various games to test their skills. With this missing the game's title does feel a little less relevant. ■

FACT

Although the Carolina Panthers and Jacksonville Jaguars had yet to join the NFL when the game launched, you could unlock them by entering A, B, C, C, B, A, A, C on the mode select screen.

NIGHT TRAP

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Digital Pictures

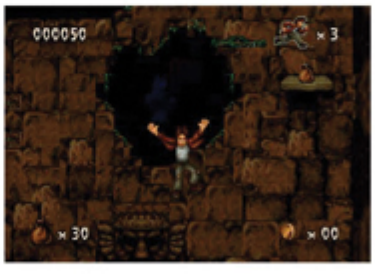
GIVEN ALL THE controversy that surrounded Night Trap when it was released on the Mega CD you'd be forgiven for expecting Sega to choose against stirring the pot again with a potential 32X port. On the contrary, Night Trap became one of the six Mega CD 32X games, which would only run if you have both a Mega CD and a 32X attached to your Mega Drive. The game plays just the same as it does in the standard Mega CD version, but the video quality is noticeably sharper. It's still fairly grainy, though and compared to other versions of the game such as the 3DO, it's still not the best of the bunch (that said, the 32X game runs at 15 frames per second while the 3DO one only runs at 12). ■

FACT

Hit Up, A, A, A, A, A when the 'in memory of' message appears in the credits and you'll see footage of Digital Pictures staff showing Hasbro the prototype version of Night Trap, entitled Scene of the Crime.

PITFALL: THE MAYAN ADVENTURE

Year 1995
Publisher Activision
Developer Activision



OF ALL THE 32X games that were ported over from the Mega Drive, Pitfall is perhaps the most interesting. Look at a still image of the 32X version and you would naturally conclude that it looked better than the Mega Drive and Mega CD ones: the game has a higher colour palette and some of the sprites and backgrounds have been redrawn. It also includes the extra levels that were added to the Mega CD version, so on paper it should be the definitive edition. However, the 32X port only runs at 30 frames per second compared to 60 on the Mega CD and also suffers from serious slowdown at times, meaning despite the extra power of the 32X the Mega CD version is generally considered the best. ■

FACT

Pitfall is the only game that was released on the Mega Drive, Mega CD and 32X (assuming that Brutal Unleashed counts as a separate update/ sequel).

PRIMAL RAGE

Year 1995
Publisher Time Warner Interactive
Developer Probe

DUE TO ITS success in the arcades, Primal Rage was ported to no fewer than 11 different systems. The Mega Drive version was considered one of the weaker offerings (handheld ports aside), mainly because the game sprites were shrunk significantly to keep the game running smoothly and the fighting system didn't perfectly replicate that of the arcade game. The 32X version addresses some of these issues but fails to change others: the character sprites have been enlarged and look more detailed than they did on the Mega Drive, but the combat is still similar, meaning it too lacks the depth of the arcade version. Sega fans would eventually be sated, though, by the significantly improved Saturn version, which looked far more like the arcade game. ■

FACT

Primal Rage 2 was in development for arcades but was cancelled. The sequel's plot was released as a novel, however, entitled *Primal Rage: The Avatars*.

RBI BASEBALL '95

Year 1995
Publisher Time Warner Interactive
Developer Time Warner Interactive

YOU CAN SAY what you like about the 32X but the system can at least boast one thing you'll never be able to take away from it: it received an exclusive annual entry in a popular sports series. RBI Baseball '95 was only available on the 32X and improved on RBI '94 by revamping the game's camera during batting. Whereas the previous games in the series featured a typical raised camera that looked down at home plate so you could see the pichter and batter from above, RBI '95 puts a camera right behind the plate, almost as if you're looking through the catcher's eyes. All the other typical features are here, including the MLBPA license for real player names, and the option to play a full 162-game season. ■

FACT

On 6 January 1995 Time Warner Interactive released a press statement saying that RBI 95 was coming to the Sega CD for $49.95 and the 32X for $54.95. The Sega CD version was cancelled.

SHADOW SQUADRON

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

ALTHOUGH THE 32X launched alongside a port of Star Wars Arcade, that didn't mean Sega had exhausted its repertoire of space shooters. Shadow Squadron (known as Stellar Assault in Europe) is another sci-fi shootfest which has you climbing aboard one of two different space fighters known as Feathers and taking on six different missions (most of which ultimately resort in some sort of variation of 'blow everyone up into little bits of space sand'. Each of the two ships handles differently: one moves quickly but has weaker weapons, while the other is heavier with more powerful lasers and a stronger shield, but is slower as a result. It doesn't reinvent the wheel, then, but many praised its impressive polygonal visuals regardless of this. ■

FACT

If you aren't too keen on flying your ship, the game has an autopilot mode where the ship flies itself and you simply aim your cursor to shoot, much like an on-rails shooter.

SLAM CITY WITH SCOTTIE PIPPEN

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Digital Pictures

CONSIDERING IT WAS by far the largest game on the Mega CD, clocking in at a hefty four discs, it's perhaps surprising that Sega saw fit to release Slam City in a fancier Mega CD 32X flavour as well, resulting in another multiple-disc monstrosity. As with the other Mega CD 32X games, Slam City's video quality has been significantly improved compared to that of the standard Mega CD version, allowing you to better see the bad actors you've been put up against, as well as the soundstage that's been hastily disguised to look like a street basketball court. At least the beautifully terrible rap song recorded by Pippen himself remains intact: your cringes have never been so highly defined. ■

FACT

Don't hold this against Scottie Pippen, incidentally: the guy won six NBA Championships with the Bulls and is a two-time Hall of Fame inductee (both as an individual and a part of the US Dream Team at the 1992 Olympics).

SPACE HARRIER

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

THE 32X VERSION of Space Harrier is almost an identical situation to that of the 32X version of After Burner. Both games attempt to create a far more accurate version of their arcade counterparts, and both manage this by making extensive use of the 32X's sprite scaling capabilities, making each game come closer to 'arcade perfect' than any other port before it. As such, both were considered the definitive home versions of each game at the time, though both also suffered from a drop in frame rate: while the arcade versions ran at 60 frames per second, the 32X ones stuck closer to 30. As a result, both were made somewhat obsolete when arcade-perfect 60fps versions arrived on the Sega Saturn. ■

FACT

If you really want the full arcade experience, hold down A and C then press Start on a second controller to play in 'arcade mode', which doesn't seem to do a lot more than replace 'Press Start' with 'Insert Coin'.

SPIDER-MAN:WEB OF FIRE

Year 1996
Publisher Sega
Developer BlueSky Software

EVERY STORY HAS to end somewhere, and the 32X's story ended with Spider-Man: Web of Fire, the final game released for the system in North America. HYDRA has created a massive electrical plasma grid, which has been placed over New York like a big evil blanket and is causing mass destruction, with skyscrapers collapsing and citizens dropping like flies. It's up to Spidey – with the occasional help from Daredevil, who can swing across the screen at times – to head to HYDRA's headquarters, but not before taking out the New Enforcers, a group of bosses who are guarding the various generators that keep the grid active. 'Who will prevail, the net or the web?' asks the game's box, seemingly not yet aware that they mean the same thing online. ■

FACT

It's claimed that only 1,500 copies of Web of Fire were produced, which may go some way to explaining why it's such an expensive game to find online these days.

STAR TREK: STARFLEET ACADEMY STARSHIP BRIDGE SIMULATOR

Year 1995
Publisher Interplay
Developer Interplay

IF YOU'VE EVER wondered what it would be like to be like Captain Kirk or Jean-Luc Picard, then tough: the Starship Bridge Simulator doesn't let you play as them. Instead, you step into the well-ironed uniform of a new recruit at the Starfleet Academy, who is given a series of training missions so they can learn what it takes to work on and ultimately command a Federation vessel. There are five different ships you'll get to control throughout the course of the game: a Science Vessel, a Light Cruiser, a Heavy Cruiser, a Romulan Vessel and a Klingon Vessel. If you can manage to make your way from cadet all the way up to command, you'll be given the chance to take on the famously unbeatable Kobayashi Maru scenario. ■

FACT

In *Star Trek* lore, the Starfleet Academy was set up in 2161, and was built in Fort Baker, California, right across from the Golden Gate Bridge.

STAR WARS ARCADE

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

STAR WARS ARCADE originally launched in arcades (obviously) in the summer of 1993 before being ported to the 32X as a launch title the following year to show off the hardware's polygon-pushing capabilities. There are two different play modes available: arcade mode and 32X mode. The first replicates the four stages of the arcade game, in which you take on a series of TIE Fighters, try to bring down a Super Star Destroyer, then make your way to the Death Star and do the trench run. The 32X mode adds another four stages, designed to make the game last a little longer: these mainly consist of spending more time on the surface of the Death Star and flying inside it to destroy the core from within. ■

FACT

As in the arcade version, there's also a two-player mode where one player flies the craft and the other mans the guns.

SUPREME WARRIOR

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Digital Pictures

IF YOU'VE BEEN reading this book in order, then you'll already know what to expect here. Supreme Warrior is a 32X enhanced version of the Digital Pictures' first-person Mega CD fighting game, which has been specially designed to take advantage of both the the Mega CD's FMV capabilities and the extra power provided by the 32X for higher quality video which uses more colours. Naturally, then, the Mega CD 32X version of Supreme Warrior is the preferable one if you're fortunate enough to own both a Mega CD and a 32X. Don't be too disheartened if you don't own the latter, though, because the game itself plays identically to the Mega CD version: the only thing it benefits from is the improved video quality. ■

FACT

To make sure it felt like your opponent was really hitting you, the crew filming the action scenes wrapped a camera in padding and got the fighters to actually hit it.

SURGICAL STRIKE

Year 1995
Publisher TecToy
Developer The Code Monkeys

DON'T WORRY, THIS is the last of the Mega CD 32X games, so you don't have to read the usual 'better video quality' spiel any more. That said, Surgical Strike does have a little more going for it, because it's actually the only 32X game that was exclusively released in Brazil by Sega's Brazilian distributor TecToy. As such, it's obscenely difficult to find, with only two known copies in existence. Whether it's worth tracking one down is up for debate, because as with the other Mega CD 32X games, Surgical Strike is practically the Mega CD version with enhanced picture quality. Most players would therefore be advised to stick with the Mega CD game instead, because the jump in fidelity isn't striking enough to justify the leap in price. ■

FACT

In 2017 Brazilian website VGDB re-released and sold reproductions of the 32X version in very limited numbers. They also, however, made the CD image available on their site for free so players could burn their own playable discs.

T-MEK

Year 1995
Publisher Time Warner Interactive
Developer Bits Studios

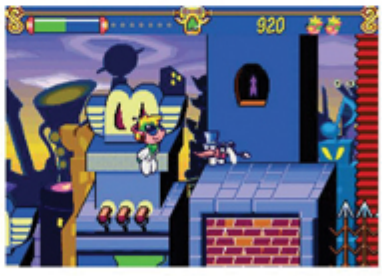
T-MEK WAS AN Atari game that came to arcades in 1994 and was immediately compared (favourably) to Namco's similar Cyber Sled. It's a tank-based arena battle game where you choose one of six different MEKs (floating tank hovercraft thingies) and use a variety of weapons – missiles, homing missiles, lasers, acid drones and the like – to take out the other MEKs in the arena. There's a plot in there somewhere about defeating the bosses of six different planets in order to challenge Nazraq, the supreme ruler of the solar system, but this is all just an elaborate way of justifying the game's real purpose, which is to hover around blasting the hell out of everything you see. And there's nothing wrong with that. ■

FACT

The sit-down deluxe version of the T-MEK arcade cabinet was an imposing creation. With twin sticks for each player, four speakers around their head and a subwoofer under their seat, immersion was guaranteed.

TEMPO

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Red Company



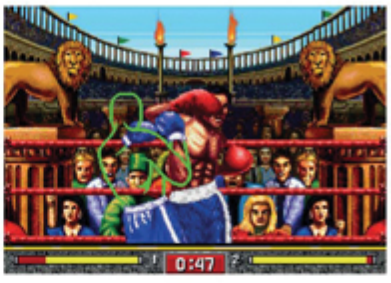
TEMPO IS A platformer developed by the same team responsible for the PC Kid / Bonk games that were so popular on the TurboGrafx-16 and other systems. This one didn't catch on so well, but that's perhaps down to the format rather than the game, which is quite charming. You play as Tempo, a 'hyper groovin grasshopper' who has to stop the evil King Dirge from stealing the rhythm out of Planet Rhythmia. Occasionally accompanied by his butterfly girlfriend Katy, Tempo has to make his way through seven 'performances' (stages), taking out enemies along the way to reach King Dirge. The quality of the animation and backgrounds is extremely high, and were it not for the fact it was a 32X game, Tempo could have been a huge success. ■

FACT

Despite the general indifference to him, Tempo got two sequels: Tempo Jr on the Game Gear, and the Japan-only Super Tempo on the Saturn.

TOUGHMAN CONTEST

Year 1995
Publisher Electronic Arts
Developer Visual Concepts



ALTHOUGH EA HAD done some impressive things with FIFA '96 by making a genuine attempt to make use of the 32X's additional power and genuinely overhaul the game's look and feel as a result, it's probably fair to say that Toughman Contest didn't inspire a similar sense of evolution. Instead, its Super Punch-Out imitation plays identically on both the Mega Drive and 32X, and the only notable difference to the latter is the updated backgrounds, which add more colours and detail to make the game look admittedly more impressive than the standard 16-bit version does. Anyone who already owned the Mega Drive game, however, would have probably been wasting their money if they were purely forking out more cash just for slightly better defined crowds. ■

FACT

Rap star Coolio is one of your opponents in the game. This was shortly before his 'Gangsta's Paradise' single was released, turning him into a superstar.

VIRTUA FIGHTER

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

WHEN SEGA LAUNCHED the Saturn, it did so alongside a port of Virtua Fighter, its iconic polygonal arcade fighting game. Many complained, however, that the Saturn version felt a little rushed for launch, with less detail than the arcade version, intrusive loading games, a number of strange bugs and a distracting quirk that caused polygons to flicker. In some gamers' eyes, then, the 32X port of Virtua Fighter is actually the most impressive, especially given that the 32X is less powerful than the Saturn. With none of the loading times or flickering of its CD-based big brother, and with every character, move and feature included (and even some modes of its own, like the 8-player tournament option), this was an impressive port of a key gaming milestone. ■

FACT

Sega released an updated version on the Saturn a few months later called Virtua Fighter Deluxe, which fixed some of the flickering (though not all of it) and added texture mapping to the polygons.

VIRTUA RACING DELUXE

Year 1994
Publisher Sega
Developer Sega

THE MEGA DRIVE port of Virtua Racing was a remarkable achievement. Critics and gamers alike showered Sega with praise for somehow managing to get such a technically demanding game running on the humble 16-bit Mega Drive, albeit with extra polygon-pushing power added to the cartridge. That said, even the most enthusiastic optimist would struggle to suggest that the Mega Drive version was close to the arcade original in terms of performance, and so when the 32X launched it did so alongside Virtua Racing Deluxe, an enhanced port handled by the same team, which came much closer to the arcade version in terms of polygon count, track detail and frame rate. As a launch title, however, Virtua Racing Deluxe was going to have to do a bit more than simply look better than its predecessor, so Sega added some new cars and tracks that weren't present in the arcade version. Rather than only having the option to race in a Formula One style car, Deluxe added a stock racing car and an aerodynamic 'prototype' car, each with their own look and feel. On top of this, while the game still featured the three tracks from the arcade version (Big Forest, Bay Bridge and Acropolis), it also included two completely new tracks exclusive to the 32X game: one set in the mountains that was named Highland, and one set in the desert entitled Sand Park. The result was a game that still didn't manage to match the arcade version for visual detail, but actually outdid it when it came to content. ■

FACT

Sega decided to go back to the Virtua Racing pool one more time for a Saturn version, which featured a new Grand Prix mode, four new cars and seven new courses, making it feel more like a sequel than a port.

WORLD SERIES BASEBALL STARRING DEION SANDERS

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer BlueSky Software

ALTHOUGH THE REMOVAL of the year from the title implied the 32X version was a standalone release, World Series Baseball is nevertheless based on the '95 edition on the Genesis. That said, put both games side-by-side and it's clear the 32X version has some improvements. The large batter sprite doesn't have the Mega Drive version's dithering effect and the game looks generally sharper and cleaner all around. Another entirely cosmetic but impressive feature on the 32X is a zooming effect in the outfield. As a fly ball heads towards an outfielder, the camera will zoom in on them so you can see the catch in more detail. This aside, it's still more or less World Series '95, with all MLB teams and MLBPA players intact. ■

FACT

Deion Sanders is more famous for his American football run than his baseball run. He won the Super Bowl twice, but 'only' appeared in the World Series once, losing to the Toronto Blue Jays.

WWF RAW

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Sculptured Software

THE 32X VERSION of WWF Raw contains a surprising number of tweaks and additions. Most notably, there's an exclusive hidden wrestler, the generally forgotten Kwang, who can be unlocked by pressing Down, A and B on the character select screen. As well as switching the turnbuckles and apron from red to purple for some reason, the game also occasionally switches out the standard commentary pair (Vince McMahon and Jerry Lawler) for Gorilla Monsoon and Stephanie Wiand. You can now also pick up new weapons when you're outside the ring, including a first aid kit and a big wooden Raw sign. Although none of these additions are game-changing in any way, it's at least nice to see some effort made to differentiate the versions. ■

FACT

Kwang was portrayed by Juan Rivera. The character debuted in January 1994 and lasted until April 1995, at which point the character was ditched and Rivera instead became the far more popular Savio Vega.

WWF WRESTLEMANIA: THE ARCADE GAME

Year 1995
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Sculptured Software

THERE CAN'T BE many systems who can claim that 5 per cent of their entire library consists of WWF games, but there you go. Rather than starting from scratch and trying to more accurately emulate the arcade version, the 32X WrestleMania instead uses the Mega Drive version as a base and builds on top of that: this means the game looks more like an upgrade of the 16-bit version rather than a downgrade of the arcade one (if that makes sense). Regardless, it does still look more impressive than the Mega Drive game and does add more commentary. One large concession, however, is the frame rate, which has been halved from 60 frames per second to 30. While this alleviates the slowdown found in the Mega Drive version, it's still a shame. ■

FACT

Two WWF games on one system may not seem like a big deal, but if the Mega Drive had had the same proportion of WWF games in its library, it would've had 40 of them.

ZAXXON'S MOTHERBASE 2000

Year 1995
Publisher Sega
Developer CSK Research Institute

KNOWN IN EUROPE as simply Motherbase, Zaxxon's Motherbase 2000 bears more than a striking resemblance to Sega's memorable 1982 arcade shoot 'em up Zaxxon, most notably because of its isometric viewpoint, but in reality it originally had nothing to do with it (the game was called Parasquad in Japan and Sega rebranded it for North America because of its similarity). You play as an insectoid creature who pilots a ship called the Stinger in an attempt to destroy the Ginglii, a clan of other insects who had taken over the Hive Confederation and turned other clans into their slaves. You can dock the Stinger into one of four 'courier' ships, and use their unique skills to help take on the (literal) swarms of enemies that attack. ■

FACT

Zaxxon was famous for being the first notable game to use an isometric viewpoint. The title is actually taken from the term 'axonomic projection', of which isometric projection is a type.